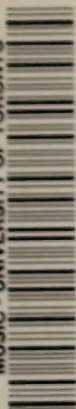



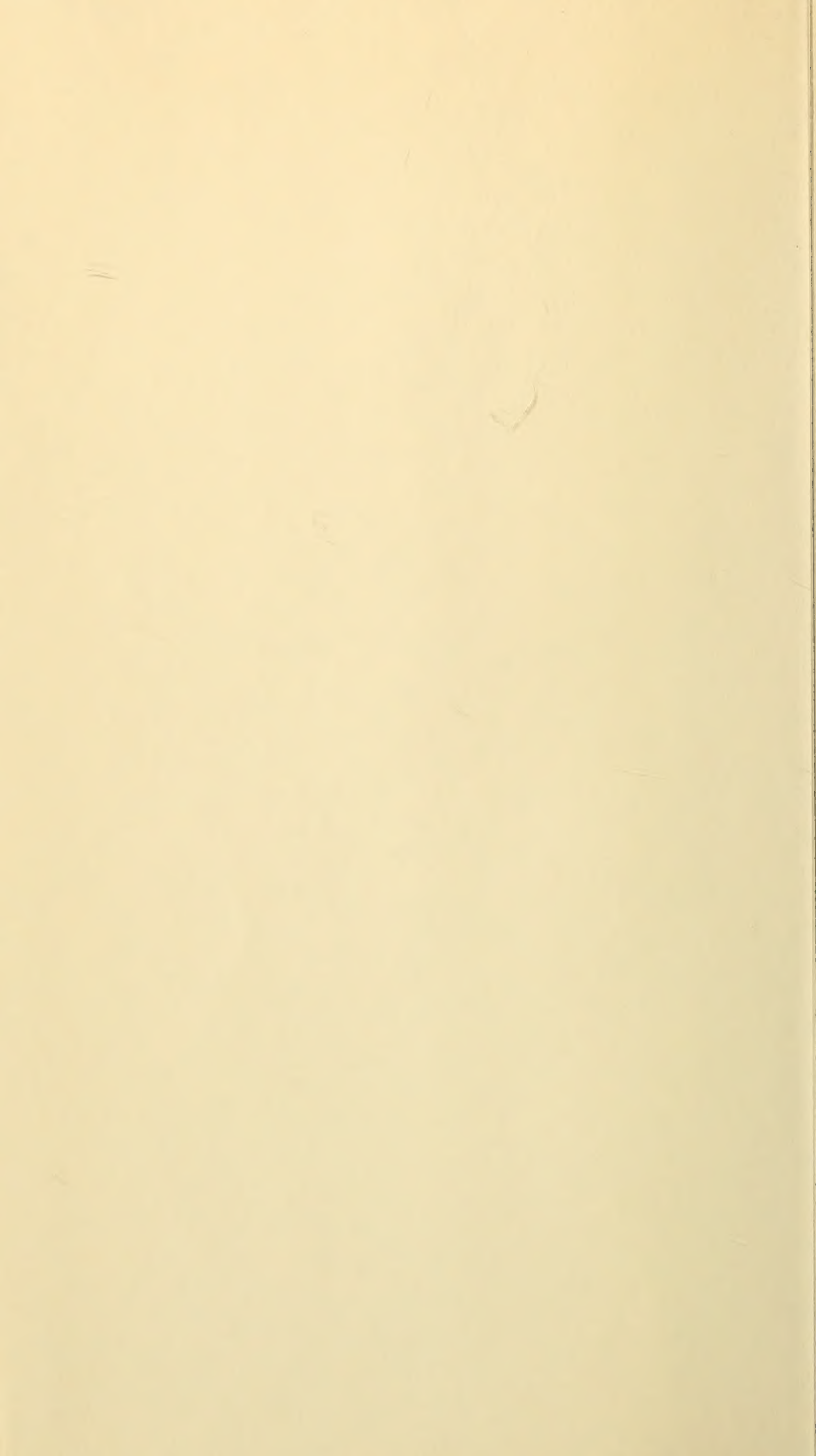
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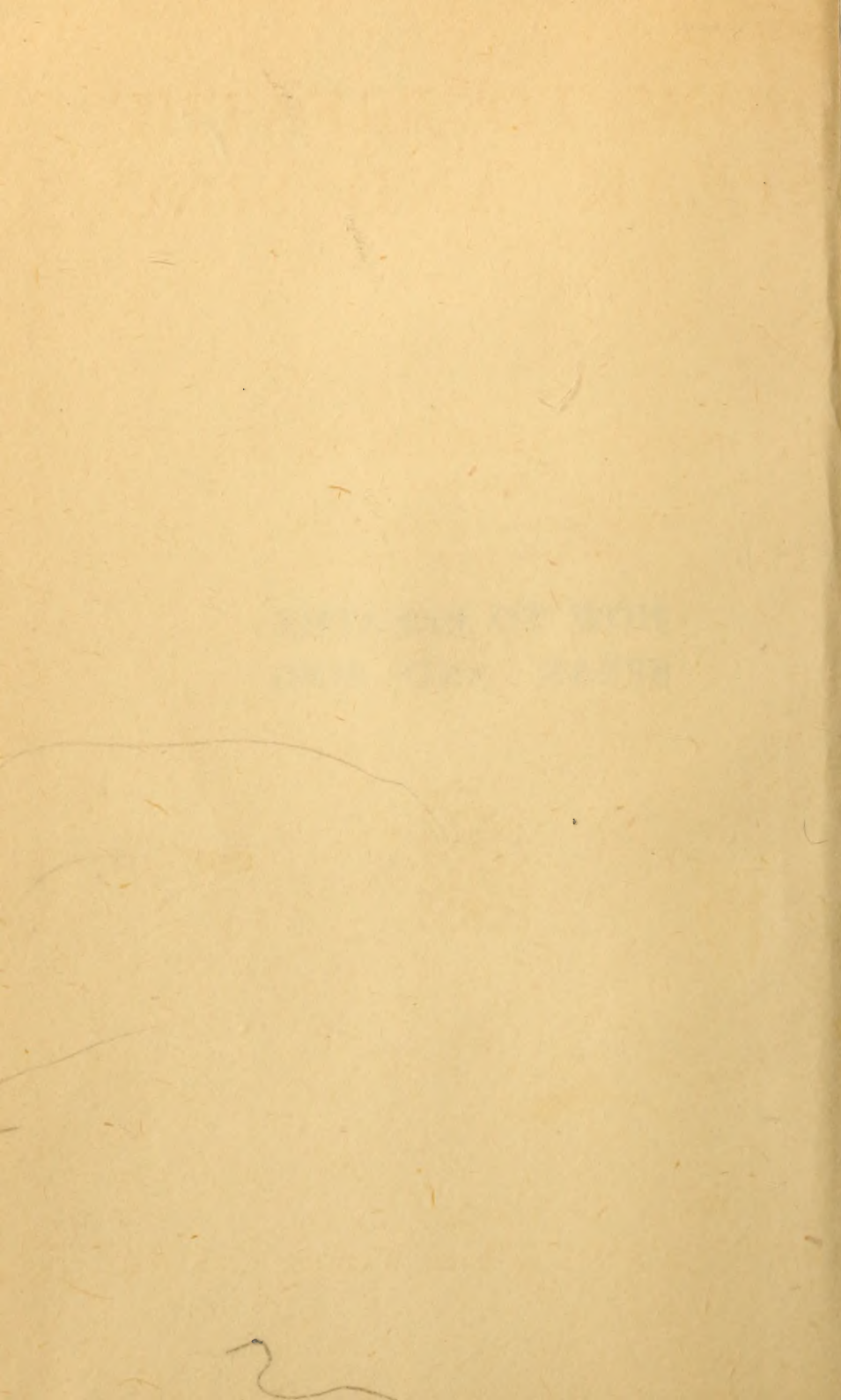




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HOW TO BREATHE
SPEAK AND SING



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HOW TO BREATHE SPEAK AND SING

BY
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SANS PEUR ET
SANS REPROCHE



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TO MY LITTLE DAUGHTER

VIOLET

WHOSE EARLY PROMISE OF A BEAUTIFUL
VOICE GIVES RISE TO THE HOPE THAT SHE
MAY SOME DAY PROFIT BY THESE PAGES



PREFACE

THE following pages are the substance of lectures I have delivered from time to time at various centres in London.

My object has been to set forth the main features of the Old Italian Method of voice production in relation more particularly to the study of the speaking voice, and to show that, whether for singing or elocution, the same preliminary training is necessary.

The "Old Italian Method" is a debatable term, and my meaning will be clearer when I say that I refer to the method taught by the late Francesco Lamperti, of Milan, by Mr. William Shakespeare, and by Mr. Edward Iles, of the Royal Academy of Music.

A desire to shed light in dark places, and by reference to its numerous advantages—artistic, hygienic, and therapeutic—to encourage people to apply themselves to the study of voice production has also contributed to the writing of this little work. A series of progressive exercises designed for the student will be found at the end of Chapters I, II, III, and VIII.

My experience as a teacher at the London

County Council evening schools goes to show that, if performed with intelligence and perseverance, these exercises will do much to remove vocal troubles, and will lay the foundation of a cultivated and standard pronunciation, even in the most unpromising cases.

The collection of vocal exercises with piano accompaniment at the conclusion of this volume, together with Chapter VIII, which deals with the Old Italian Method, will be found of more interest to the vocalist than to the student of the speaking voice, though the latter is strongly advised to bear in mind the dictum of Morell Mackenzie, which appears at the head of Chapter I, and to resolutely pursue his studies in the direction of vocal technique.

I have to express my indebtedness to the work of Lamperti, "The Art of Singing," published by Ricordi, of London and Milan, in 1884. The quotations in Lamperti's name are all taken from this work. I must also acknowledge the assistance I have derived in the preparation of Chapter VII from the perusal of Mr. Frederick Harrison's work, "Reading and Readers," published by Methuen.

Letters to the Author can be addressed care of the publisher.

ROBERT STEPHENSON.

86 SEYMOUR STREET, W.

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MR. ROBERT STEPHENSON AS THESEUS IN THE "HIPPOLYTUS" OF EURIPIDES, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON, MARCH, 1912.



HOW TO BREATHE, SPEAK, AND SING

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

"I believe that singing might with advantage be taught as an aid to elocution."--MORELL MACKENZIE.

VOICE production is an art. Without vocal training it is impossible to say correctly even—

"Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water"—

to say it with perfectly formed phonetic values, with appropriate inflection, and with beauty and continuity of tone.

And here let me say that by voice production I mean, unless otherwise stated, *the production of the voice associated with articulated language*. The effect of this definition is not to make, as some people would be quick to suppose, the subject conterminous with elocution or sustained and powerful speaking.

Even in relation to singing, however beau-

tiful the voice may be, language is necessary to make an effective appeal both to the mind and to the emotions of the hearer just as in relation to elocution an open and equal vocal tone and a serviceable compass are required to give force and persuasion to the words.

Whether as a basis of speaking or singing the student must first learn to produce sounds with equality of tone and pitch, and this is what I take Morell Mackenzie to have meant by the remark quoted at the head of this chapter.

He assuredly did not mean that the student of elocution could profitably apply himself to any form of advanced musical composition.

Voice production, then, according to my definition, signifies the development of the voice on lines equally useful and equally necessary both to the vocalist and to the elocutionist, and I hope to show that the common ground of speech and song is much more considerable than is commonly supposed.

Having said so much, I may not unreasonably be asked, When does voice production, this common ground of speech and song, develop into singing on the one hand and elocution on the other? In reply to this question, I will merely say for the present that in singing the voice is associated, not only with words but with certain combinations of pitch, and length of note, known as musical composition, in the interpretation of which the words become of subordinate value to the musical quality of the voice, whereas in

elocution, however musical the voice may be, and though it rise and fall, even rhythmically, our attention should never be withdrawn from the import of the words. It follows that singing requires a knowledge of music and a high degree of vocal technique, particularly in crescendo and diminuendo and in passing from one note to another.

Elocution, on the other hand, calls for some knowledge of the rudiments of reasoning and of the human emotions. It requires also a knowledge of literature and good composition. But the student who wishes to excel in either of these branches of the vocal art will find in the lengthened preparation of voice production the surest road to success.

Voice production is also, for a variety of reasons to which I shall call attention in the following pages, an extremely valuable accomplishment.

Some people are inclined to dispute this statement. Actors—actresses are more intelligent—say that it may be all very well in relation to singing, but that as regards the speaking voice it tends to destroy personality, and in support of this view they point to sundry notable examples of actors whose voices have become affected and unnatural through studying voice production.

Such cases prove nothing save what we already know—namely, that charlatans abound.

Voice production, on the contrary, tends to develop the personality, and is one of the most

cultural and useful arts with which the intelligence of man can concern itself, and one which, as I shall show later, quite apart from the question of singing or elocution, confers immense benefits upon those who master its true principles.

All arts have had their periods of efflorescence and decay. The art of singing, the youngest of the arts, attained its highest expression in Italy towards the close of the seventeenth century. In the teaching of Francesco Lamperti of Milan it shone forth again about 1860. To suppose, however, that it is necessarily associated with the Italian tongue is a mistake. Any language can be spoken or sung on true artistic principles, and, if so, it at once becomes beautiful.

It would be foolish to pretend that the vocal art of the present day is anything but debased.

The quality of the human voice is as good as ever it was ; thousands of beautiful young voices are annually dealt with by the vocal teacher ; many of these voices belong to earnest, ambitious students, who would willingly devote the necessary time and money to mastering the art if only they were put upon the right road ; but it is a melancholy fact that many more voices are ruined than are improved by vocal study. Nor is there any enlightened public opinion to which appeal can be made. We find firms of educational booksellers refusing to publish works on voice production on the ground that there is

no one to say who is right and who is wrong ; we find the head of the Education Department cautiously disclaiming adherence to any particular method of respiration. At the musical academies we find every kind of respiration being taught, and even the doctrine that one method is as good as another, with the knowledge and assent of the Principals of these institutions. And on all hands we meet with the utmost indifference and unconcern. That charlatans, therefore, should abound is a symptom of the low state to which the vocal art has declined in our day.

On the principle of Lewis Carroll's Bellman, who affirmed that

"What I tell you three times is true,"

let me say once more that voice production is an art.

In other words, it is not an intellectual proposition. Its secrets cannot be extracted from the mental crucible. Things have to be done and *felt*. The vocal organs, sub-conscious in their action, have to be harnessed or correlated to achieve the desired result.

No doubt true art and true science are conformable, or, as some malignant people would perhaps prefer to state the proposition, science is but the reasoned and laborious expression of true art.

Hence it follows that each is mutually useful to the other as a touchstone by which to distinguish the true from the alloy.

I shall, in fact, have a good deal to say about vocal physiology, and I shall avail myself of the testimony of those who have written about it; but let it be clearly understood that this branch of the subject is only introduced for the purpose of affording additional criteria in the quest of truth, and that as far as the practical accomplishment of speaking or singing is concerned, all knowledge of vocal physiology is supererogatory.

No amount of physiological learning will ever teach a man how to speak or how to sing, or will ever qualify him to instruct others.

The futility of investigating the physiology of the vocal organs must be apparent to any one who reflects upon the fact that their action is subconscious or outside the immediate direction of the will.

It is inconceivable that Nature should have intended us to delve into these arcana in order to speak or sing to the best advantage.

Of the extremely complex action of the vocal cords we have no consciousness whatever.

A message is sent to them from the brain to adjust themselves in such a manner as to produce a note of a certain pitch and timbre.

This is performed, more or less correctly, according to the condition and correlation of the vocal organs, but not until the vibrating column of air set in motion by the vocal cords reaches the resonating chamber in the mouth are we aware that it has been done or that we have vocalized, and in judging whether the command

of the will has been faithfully executed we have to rely on the testimony of the ear.

The education of this organ must therefore proceed hand in hand with the adjustment of the vocal machine, and the pupil must constantly be made aware by the force of example what constitutes beautiful tone and standard pronunciation.

It is significant that while there are undoubtedly musical instruments elementary instruction in which can safely be left to persons of very mediocre ability, in the case of the voice the more elementary the instruction the more necessary are the services of one who is himself master of his art.

One reason for this would appear to be the inexorable necessity of acquiring the correct method of breathing before anything else.

Just as Nature has provided two methods of locomotion, walking and running, so she has provided two methods of breathing, both equally natural ; one for the ordinary requirements of sustaining life and of normal intercourse between individuals, and the other for singing and sustained and powerful speaking and many acts of physical exertion, such as running, fighting, diving, wrestling, and the like. These two methods of respiration are known respectively as *normal respiration* and *respiration with effort*.

From a very early age we acquire a knowledge of the former, but it is quite possible to go through the whole of one's life with only the most limited knowledge of the latter. * Nature

has left that for us to discover. She provides the vocal and respiratory organs ; it is for us to learn their higher and artistic use.

The whole question of voice production hangs to a great extent upon these two methods of respiration, and much misunderstanding exists with reference to them.

There are people who affirm that respiration with effort may be necessary for singing, but that normal respiration is all that is necessary for speech.

There are, again, others who, while admitting that sustained and powerful speaking calls for respiration with effort, affirm that the method of respiration employed should be merely an extension of the normal.

Let us deal with these propositions in turn.

The first can only proceed from an infinitely low ideal of the art of oratory.

Shall that subtle combination of logic and passion which has swayed the fate of nations, which has moved multitudes to tears, to remorse, to exasperation, to rebellion be denied the use of the more powerful of the two methods of respiration? The proposition has only to be stated to be dismissed.

Moreover, the man who would attempt to do these things by employing the normal method will merely render himself ineffectual and ridiculous.

The second proposition, that though artistic speaking requires respiration with effort, this should be merely an extension of the normal,

is also wrong, and turns upon an old controversy in relation to breathing, which will be fully dealt with in the next chapter.

The idea that singing is one thing and elocution another, requiring different methods of respiration and different methods of instruction, has unhappily taken deep root in the public mind. Much false doctrine has been written concerning it.

Writers who have set out by postulating the necessity of different methods of respiration have not unnaturally been at some pains to bolster up their opinions by pseudo-scientific data concerning the physiology of the voice.

The truth is that physiologically the difference between singing and elocution is almost undefinable.

Morell Mackenzie says: "I am almost disposed to doubt whether the difference between speech and song is anything more than that in the former the range is limited to a very few notes delivered without regard to musical time." He might have added that words are uttered with much greater rapidity and with more regard to the laws of standard pronunciation and contraction.

But considered physiologically the respiratory organs, the vocal cords, the resonating cavities, the organs of articulation each perform exactly the same rôle in both cases,¹ except that in singing the vocal cords are held for a longer

¹ See St. Clair Thompson, "An Address on the Necessities and Advantages of Voice Culture," Holywell Press, Oxford.

period in a given position and must necessarily be of considerable beauty and strength.

That elocution should differ so much from singing in respect of its limited compass, its poor quality of tone, and its throat interference ; that it should be the unlovely, stilted, unnatural, and affected thing which passes current is mainly due to the fact that the one and only correct method of respiration with effort is hardly ever taught in relation to it.

Yet the art of speaking and the art of singing is really one, and it is impossible, whatever the limitations of the organ may be, to acquire real proficiency in either of these branches of vocalization without at the same time becoming to some extent proficient in the other.

Pacchiarotti, who was probably the greatest vocalist of the second half of the eighteenth century, wrote in his memoirs :—

“He who knows how to breathe and how to pronounce knows well how to sing.”

And Mr. Hullah, the gifted author of the “Speaking Voice,” published a good many years ago by the Clarendon Press, justly observed :—

“The action of the vocal mechanism is complicated by a condition from which that of every other musical instrument is free, namely, that the instrumental performer has not merely to play, but to say, and both at the same instant.”

If, therefore, both singing and artistic speaking require respiration with effort, and the same kind of respiration with effort, and if, as

Pacchiarotti and Mr. Hullah have pointed out, one cannot speak without singing, and one cannot sing without speaking, does it not follow that the instruction in the two cases should in its early stages be identical?

Both as a matter of theory and from my own experience as a teacher I can testify that it does.

Artistic speaking requires the same technique of breathing, the same tone-building and tone-placing as singing.

Artistic singing requires the same faultless phonetics, the same precise and unerring articulation as speaking.

In other words, it is necessary in both cases to pay attention to the two extremities of the vocal instrument.

Let it be granted, then, that one cannot learn to speak artistically without at the same time developing the voice as for singing, and that one cannot learn to sing without learning the art of articulation.

What is the right attitude of mind—for there is nothing like beginning at the beginning—with which the student should address himself to his studies?

The question is important because there is a school of teaching largely to be met with in London which regards the cultivation of the voice as merely a matter of physical culture, to be acquired by dumb-bells and calisthenics ; and it is therefore necessary to insist that the criterion of all art is beauty.

Whether it be beauty of line, beauty of form, beauty of colour, or beauty of tone, that must be the objective of every student, and it must be with a mind attuned to the beautiful that he pursues his studies.

EXERCISES FOR THE STUDENT.

FIRST EXERCISE.

(N.B.—In describing the following exercises, it has been found unavoidable to employ a few terms the explanation of which has been deferred till later chapters.)

Exercises calculated to promote the production of beautiful tone are few in number and are characterized by extreme simplicity. They may be divided into unvocalized and vocalized. The student, whether of singing or elocution, must be content to begin at the beginning, and must confine himself at first to unvocalized exercises. To describe these exercises in such a way that the student may profitably practise them without oral instruction is an extremely difficult matter.

The most elementary of all unvocalized exercises, and one which is a tradition of the "Lamperti" school, is the "little breath" or "dog's pant."

It consists of little breaths in and out through the mouth like the panting of a dog which has been running. These little breaths should be unmistakably felt on the roof of the mouth and should proceed from the base of the lung

immediately below the breast-bone, where the movements should be seen externally.

These breaths should be effected with an absolutely relaxed throat and chin, the mouth being only slightly open, and the sound coming to the ear should unmistakably proceed from the impact of the breath on the hard palate, and not from a squeezed throat. This exercise should be assiduously practised until the breath becomes "placed"—*i.e.*, passes loosely backwards and forwards over the roof of the mouth, with the soft palate held up and the throat wide open.

It affects in a remarkable degree the correlation of the vocal organs; but this will be clearer to the student when he has read the following chapters.

It only remains to add that to effect this exercise properly the pose of the body has to be considered. All the muscles should be as flaccid as possible, one leg well advanced, the knee bent, the back leg straight, the arms hanging loosely like ropes from the shoulder-points, the neck fairly upright, the chin well back, and the lips and cheeks hanging loosely away from the teeth. (This condition may be encouraged by gently drawing them forward with the fingers.)

This exercise is the basis of all vocal technique, and its importance cannot be exaggerated.

CHAPTER II

THE INSPIRATORY ACT

IN my last chapter I endeavoured to show (1) that respiration with effort was alike necessary for singing and artistic speaking ; and (2) that this respiration with effort differed from normal respiration, not merely in degree but in kind.

Having to some extent cleared the ground, let us consider this respiration with effort with greater attention to detail.

Nature is extremely accommodating. She allows us to inflate the lungs in a number of different ways, all of which are capable of sustaining life, but only one of which has the Muse stamped with her approval, and that one, as we shall see later, a hygienic and therapeutic agent of the utmost value.

There is, for instance, the clavicular method, a method to which the untrained man will generally resort when confronted with the necessity of sustained and powerful speaking.

It consists of inflating the apices or tops of the lungs, and can only be carried out to any degree requisite to the requirements of the public speaker by forcibly drawing up the clavicle or collar bone.

This is called "clavicular" or "collar-bone" breathing, and no more need be said of it than that it constitutes a very laborious physical effort utterly inimical to smooth and sustained delivery.

Or, the lungs can be inflated at their base by the combined action of the diaphragm and the floating ribs.

There are, however, two methods of doing this, and it is with reference to these two methods that the battle of voice production is chiefly waged.

Perhaps students of the voice—very young students—may be tempted to exclaim: "Why should we have to learn all this? Surely it ought not to be difficult to decide upon the right method, and surely after all these years artists and physiologists should have made up their minds!"

Dear youthful student, the wisdom of the ancients declared that "to err is human," and the saying still remains one of the small number of irrefutable truths. You must never look for absolute unanimity on any question. Something is always left to the exercise of your individual judgment.

But to proceed: These two methods are respectively the methods foreshadowed in the first chapter, one of them being merely an extension of the normal method of breathing, and the other being effected by a very different action of the respiratory organs.

It is time to rehearse their numerous appellations, and in order to ensure clear thinking

it will be convenient to do this in two parallel columns.

RESPIRATION WITH EFFORT.

Extension of Normal Breathing, variously known as—

The Abdominal Method.

The Behnke Method.

The method of deep breathing.

Exceptional or Artistic Breathing, variously known as—

The Old Italian Method.

The Costal Method.

The Diaphragmatic Method.

The Costo - Diaphragmatic Method.

The Inferior Costal Method.

The Lower Costal Method.

The Mixed Method.

Midriff breathing.

Middle breathing.

Intercostal breathing.

It is significant that a very large number of terms have been invented to express exceptional or artistic breathing, and but a small number, one of them misleading, another merely the name of a man, and the third vague, to express the extension of normal breathing. Men will always find terms, and terms rich in connotation, to express that of which they stand in need.

To describe in ordinary current words these two methods of breathing is no easy task; every science has its own highly technical language, differing from current speech almost as much as current speech differs from a foreign language, and of this rule physiology is rather a notable example than an exception.

Much of this difficulty arises from the very remarkable action of the diaphragm, which is subconscious, and can only be brought under

the dominion of the will through the action of the abdominal muscles.

The diaphragm is a powerful and tenuous muscle which forms the floor of the lung, and which spreads across the cavity of the trunk, dividing it into an upper or thoracic, and a lower or abdominal space.

In repose it somewhat resembles an inverted pudding-bowl, and owing to its resilience, and to the fact that its edges are attached at various points to the lower six ribs, to the sternum or breast-bone, and to the spine, it is capable in action of enormous transfiguration.

This transfiguration may take either of two forms, according as we contract the abdominal muscles on breathing in or allow them to remain flaccid.

If we contract these muscles, we compress the viscera, and provide support to the apex of the diaphragm, which then has a fixed point or fulcrum upon which it can act, and on breathing in flattens and contracts, the circumference rising towards the level of the apex and the apex being only slightly depressed.

Here we have the salient feature of the Old Italian Method, and it is interesting to note that in this position the diaphragm has a larger perimeter, though a smaller superficies than it has in repose. The student would also do well to fix in his mind the fact that on breathing in the diaphragm *contracts*. No one but Nature would have thought of such an ingenious arrangement.

Or, the abdominal muscles can remain in their normal condition.

In this case no support is given to the diaphragm from underneath, and on breathing in, the muscle bulges downwards at the apex, the lung gaining in vertical rather than in transverse dimension.

Here we have the abdominal method, the Behnke method, or method of deep breathing.

Those desirous of acquainting themselves more fully with the physiological aspect of the subject cannot do better than consult Joal and Wolfenden on "Respiration in Singing" and Morell Mackenzie's "Hygiene of the Vocal Organs."¹

The English language is singularly deficient in standard works on vocal physiology. The two books above mentioned are all that we have answering to this description, and the best of them—the illuminating and practical work of Dr. Joal—is the work of a Frenchman.

If the reader is prepared to face the inevitable technicalities of a scientific treatise he will experience no difficulty in acquiring from these authorities a complete grasp of the numerous and convincing arguments in favour of the Old Italian Method.

He is, however, warned that he will meet with considerable variety of terminology in describing it. Joal consistently calls it the costal method; Morell Mackenzie, the dia-

¹ Both these books are out of print, but they can be obtained through the second-hand trade.

phragmatic. Other and less trustworthy writers, imagining that these are different methods, have been guilty of contrasting them, and a very large proportion of the literature of elocution is marred by this glaring mistake at the threshold of the subject.

As Joal and Morell Mackenzie have both been at some pains to point out, costal breathing and diaphragmatic breathing are correlative terms, for it is the diaphragm which pushes the ribs out, and the one cannot move without the other.

To make confusion worse confounded, we find some recent writers on elocution advocating the abdominal method, but calling it the diaphragmatic method. The student will therefore perceive that if he wishes to obtain a clear mental conception of the issues involved, he must pick his way carefully through the literature of the subject.

Of abdominal breathing both Joal and Morell Mackenzie are unqualified opponents.

Artistically, the chief objection to this method lies in the fact that owing to the very limited control it affords over the expiratory act, it is impossible to hold the voice in the front of the mouth. The result is that this method is always associated with frontal development—*i.e.*, excessive vibration in the nasal cavities.

That teachers should deliberately set themselves to produce these hideous sounds, and that clever and gifted pupils should be satisfied with them, must ever remain a subject for pained cogitation.

They are deficient in carrying power, destitute of colour, and never perfectly in tune.

The only explanation would seem to be that these sounds are deceptive to those who employ them, that they appear to be extremely powerful and brilliant, whereas, being imprisoned, the vibrations cannot be imparted to the surrounding atmosphere.

On the other hand, the artistic advantages of the Old Italian Method may be summarised as follows :—

1. It affords the maximum air capacity of the lung.

2. It secures the greatest possible control over the expiratory act.

3. The whole sequence of movements is more easily regulated by the will.

4. It secures the greatest sonority of the voice owing to the dilatation of the thorax.

5. All the notes of the voice have a peculiar musical quality or timbre known as "silvery."

6. It is the only method which is capable of affording sufficient control over the expiratory act to sustain the tone in the front of the mouth.

And if further evidence is required of the truth of the principles here laid down, it is to be found in the fact that all great singers effect the inspiratory act with constricted abdomen.

Or if we appeal to the vocal physiologists,

their testimony, while not unanimous, is strongly in favour of this method.¹

Lastly, it may be unhesitatingly affirmed that no one who has ever mastered this method of respiration has entertained the slightest doubt that it is the right method, or has abandoned it for another.

Historically the facts may be briefly stated as follows :—

In 1855, Mandl, an eminent French physiologist, startled both artists and men of science by the announcement that in the descent of the diaphragm he had discovered a new and improved method of breathing.

The announcement was hailed with applause by that large body of uncritical persons who are always to be found in every country and every century, and it was soon claimed on behalf of this new method of breathing that it was not really new at all, but that it had previously been practised by the old Italian masters, and that in it lay the secret of their success.

Foremost among Mandl's disciples we find Gutman in America and Behnke in this country eagerly proclaiming and teaching these doctrines, and in England the method is still generally known as the Behnke method.

About this time also the celebrated Lamperti—amongst whose pupils was Mr. Shakespeare, who in his turn taught Mr. Iles, through whom I trace my own artistic descent—was persuaded

¹ See "Voice Building and Tone Placing," by Dr. Holbrook Curtis, and "Respiration in Singing," by Joal and Wolfenden.

in his old age to write some words endorsing the theory of Mandl.

The truth is that Lamperti, though a most gifted and accomplished teacher, was profoundly ignorant of physiology, and though he had been teaching the one and only correct method of respiration all his life, he was unable to distinguish it theoretically from the imposing heresy of Mandl.

But the battle has been fought and the issue decided, and it may be confidently asserted that to-day the so-called Abdominal Method is, in relation to singing, at least, almost defunct, that though it is still taught—and even so under the ægis of some of the London musical academies—its apostles cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be said to be amongst the first rank of teachers.

In relation to speaking, it is, unhappily, still in vogue.

Several causes contribute to this fact :—

1. The low ideas generally prevalent as to elocution.

Even the physiologists who advocate the Old Italian Method in relation to singing have struck an uncertain note as to the necessity of its application to the use of the speaking voice. This aspect of the matter has been already dealt with in Chapter I.

2. The argument that the Abdominal Method is the natural method.

This argument is true in the sense that the

Abdominal Method is an extension of the ordinary, or usual method; but, as I have endeavoured to show, Nature has provided two methods, one for ordinary requirements, and one for extraordinary requirements. (See Chapter I.)

3. The fact that, as a class, teachers of elocution have never had a concert-hall preparation and are consequently ignorant of the higher uses of voice production.

It still remains to describe the external signs by which these two methods can be recognized and distinguished, for with these signs every student of the voice is intimately concerned.

They are as follows :—

The Abdominal or Behnke Method, or Method of Deep Breathing.

1. During the act of inspiration the abdomen remains flaccid and is allowed to project forward.

2. During expiration it is gradually contracted.

The Old Italian Method.

Here the movements are exactly reversed.

1. Preliminary to, and during inspiration the abdomen—that is, the umbilical and hypogastric region—is forcibly contracted and slightly drawn back.

2. There is a marked protrusion of that part of the anatomy which lies immediately below the breast-bone, known to the learned

as the "epigastrium," to schoolboys as the "bread-basket," to ladies as the "doll squeak."

3. During expiration the conditions just described as characteristic of inspiration remain : for though the air is flowing away and the girth is consequently diminishing, this is due to the ribs and back falling in rather than the "doll squeak." The "doll squeak" is, in fact, the last point of resistance.

It should be noted also that during expiration the contraction of the abdominal muscle not only continues but increases.

There is a common belief that this kind of respiration is not suited to women.

Nothing is farther from the truth.

The belief arises from two causes : (1) that women do, as a class, employ the Clavicular or Superior Costal Method in normal respiration or respiration without effort ;¹ and (2) that one or two vocal physiologists of some eminence have attempted to justify this practice.²

¹ Due to the use of corsets. Morell Mackenzie observes : "Doctors have fulminated against tight lacing for the last three centuries, but to as little purpose as the Archbishop of Rheims thundered against the jackdaw. As for tight lacing, where the pressure is severe enough to deform bones, and displace organs, and where the corset resembles a surgical apparatus for fixing the ribs, it is a species of stupidity for which hardly a parallel can be found, even amongst the innumerable follies of civilized life. I have seen a girl, who showed evident signs of suffering from this cause, smile pityingly on seeing a Chinese lady attempt to walk—a singular example of the mote and the beam !"

² De Harmonie, "Manuel de Chanteur." Paris : Fisbacher.

Against this view we have to set the all but unanimous opinion of more recent authorities¹ that the Inferior Costal, or Costo-Diaphragmatic Method of breathing is equally natural and beneficial to both sexes.

To those who teach this method the ultimate verdict of science can never have been in doubt; for it is their commonest experience to see ill-developed, anæmic girls blossom into healthy and well-proportioned women.

It is inconceivable that this should be the case had Nature not approved of the method.

To sum up: there is but one correct method of "breathing with effort," whether for men or for women, for speech or for song, for purposes of art or, as we shall see later (Chapter VI), for purposes of health, and that method is inseparable from the production of beautiful tone, for Nature has delivered the keys of the vocal organs to art.

It is the only method capable of conferring control over the expiratory act, and its use, when acquired, becomes instinctive. No one will ever feel the need of pausing to consider how to adjust the respiratory organs when about to employ this method, for, like the act of running, it is intended by Nature.

EXERCISES FOR STUDENTS.

SECOND EXERCISE.

Effect the big inspiratory act as described at length in the preceding chapter; that is to

¹ See Joal and Wolfenden and Dr. Holbrook Curtis,

say, seal the lips, contract the abdominal muscles, and breathe in through the nose as slowly and deeply as possible.

The student must note that the contraction of the abdominal muscles consists of two movements: (a) a slight grip preliminary to the act of inspiration in the umbilical region, local in its action, and unaccompanied by any movement of the chest or neck or intake of breath; (b) a powerful and increasing regression of the abdominal wall as the breath is drawn in.

During the whole of this sequence of movements, which when mastered becomes as one act, the shoulders should not rise, and the neck should remain in a condition of absolute repose.

If the two movements characteristic of the grip be correctly performed, the student will on breathing in become immediately conscious of a marked protrusion at the "doll squeak."

Progress will be facilitated by applying gentle pressure to this part before breathing in. The student will then be under the obligation of pushing the resisting force outwards.

Expansion should also be unmistakably felt and seen by the spreading and rising of the floating ribs; the middle girth should sensibly increase, and as the student becomes more proficient he should also become conscious of expansion in the back below the shoulder-blades.

When the lung is full the jaw should be allowed to drop, and the abdominal muscles should be relaxed. The abdomen will then return to its normal condition, the diaphragm

will descend, the lung will contract, and the air will rush out through a wide-open and relaxed throat on to the roof of the mouth, as in the case of the little breaths (Exercise I.).

At first the student will find great difficulty in doing this, because in sealing the lips and contracting the abdominal muscles there is a tendency to contract the throat also, and so, when the time comes for exhalation, the air has to find its way out through a squeezed throat.

Physiologically, the importance of this exercise lies not merely in cultivating an open and relaxed throat, but in the action of the diaphragm, which during the process of inspiration is very slowly flattened and contracted, and during exhalation is allowed to return suddenly to its normal flaccid condition and form.

Very considerable and patient practice is needed to perform this exercise correctly. It should always be immediately preceded by the little breaths.

In this way the student will come to feel that his big inspiratory act is an enlarged edition of the little breath.

Warning.—There is a tendency after effecting the preliminary contraction of the abdominal muscles not to contract them further, and to expand the upper costal region. If the student does this, he will not enjoy the right action of the diaphragm upon which alone the Old Italian Method depends, and he must be careful from the very first instant of breathing in that his abdominal wall recedes.

CHAPTER III

THE EXPIRATORY ACT

IT is here that the difficulties of the vocal artist may be said to begin, for control over the expiratory act is the Alpha and Omega of voice production.

In the case of the untrained speaker the problem of control is solved by various extremely bad habits, the commonest of which is that of squeezing the vocal cords by straining the tensor muscles.

Sooner or later, outraged Nature is sure to demand a heavy penalty of those who employ these methods. Nervous prostration, complete breakdown are amongst the mildest of her punishments ; and when we reflect on the exquisite and delicate machinery for the production of speech which she places at our disposal little surprise can be felt that she should punish our misuse of it.

The control of the expiratory act must come, not from any part of the throat but from the lungs beneath it, or, as they have been called, the human bellows ; and as a good wife should

regulate the expenses of her husband's household, so every particle of air should be made to render up its equivalent in sound.

In considering the expiratory act we must remember that the lungs are now filled and the diaphragm contracted and flattened, as described in the preceding chapter. We have also to bear in mind that while the management of the breath in expiration depends upon the right action of the diaphragm, we can only bring this muscle under the dominion of the will through the action of the abdominal muscles. It is therefore upon the latter that we, as vocal artists, must concentrate our attention, and it is important to note that there are two ways in which the expiratory act may be effected.

(a) The abdominal muscles may be released. In this case the diaphragm descends, the lung contracts, and the air rushes out, as described in Exercise II. (b) They may be still further contracted, and the diaphragm lowered under their control. In this case the air passes away slowly, and the student who can effect this feat is already upon a very high platform of vocal art.

It is this combined action of the abdominal muscles and the diaphragm which alone secures the control of the expiratory act, and is the chief feature of the Old Italian Method.

By this beautiful and infinitely healthful action of the respiratory organs the voice may be sustained, whether in speaking or singing, for a

period of thirty or forty seconds without replenishing the breath, and with unimpaired quality of tone.

It is, moreover, the only method of control which renders it possible to produce the voice in the front of the mouth, and to totally eliminate the throat ; but this aspect of the subject will be dealt with more fully in discussing the Old Italian Method (Chapter VIII).

It is important to note here that during the expiratory act the protrusion of the little soft place or "doll squeak" continues to the last.

Both this and the contraction of the abdominal muscles are alike features of the inspiratory and expiratory acts.

It is also important to note that the thorax, which at the conclusion of the inspiratory act is widely distended, must not be held in this position, but must be allowed to freely collapse as the expiratory act continues.

The sensation produced by the expiratory act is remarkable and significant. It is one of great artistic delight. It is as though the inspiratory act were still proceeding.

The resources of generations of singing-masters have been taxed to find suitable similes with which to describe the sensation to their pupils. Lamperti was wont to say that it was like drinking.

Physiologically, the matter is simple. The combined action of the abdominal muscles and of the diaphragm constitutes a double muscular

force acting in opposite directions, and this delicately adjusted resistance being a feature both of the inspiratory and expiratory acts, the sensation in both cases is the same.

There remains the consideration of (*a*) the epiglottis, the pharynx, the uvula, the vocal cords—generally lumped together by the unscientific under the word “throat”—and (*b*) the muscles of the face, and particularly the labial muscles, which regulate the action of the upper lip. I will deal with these in turn.

If a knowledge of the physiology of breathing is not necessary for vocal salvation, something worse must be said of the study of the physiology of the throat. The first and last thing the student has to learn is to forget that he has a throat, and if he seek to promote artistic command of his voice by investigating the anatomy and physiology of his throat he may rest assured that he will fail.

I can liken such a man only to the hypochondriac who keeps a clinical thermometer under his pillow when he is ill, and takes his temperature with it.

It was a trite saying of the old Italian masters that “the Italian has no throat,” which is but the artistic expression of the fact that Nature adjusts the vocal cords for us, and gives us no consciousness of them, save when they are working wrongly.

Yet some statement of what takes place in the throat when we vocalize seems desirable, and I quote from a pamphlet written by the

Rev. J. Edgar Foster, M.A.,¹ for he gives the best and simplest statement of the facts I have seen.

He says :—

“In the throat, at the top of the windpipe, lies a movable box, called the larynx, with an opening at the top, called the glottis, across which are stretched the vocal cords.

“They are not cords, properly speaking, but membranes ; a drumhead slit across would represent them exactly. By an unconscious act of the will, we tighten or relax the tension of these membranes, throwing against them at the same time the column of air from the lungs. In this way we produce a certain sound, which, ascending into the resonant cavity of the mouth, becomes tone.

“If to this process we add a quick movement of the tongue against the roof of the mouth just behind the teeth, and then push forward the lips a little in a rounded form, we have articulation.”

Yet such is the perversity of human intelligence that quite a library of books has been written dealing with the voice on a basis of certain tone-producing changes in the mechanism of the vocal cords. These changes are supposed to take place at sundry intervals as the voice ascends the scale.

The notes grouped between these changes are called registers,² and all kinds of fanciful

¹ Published by Simpkin, Marshall & Co.

² Manuel Garcia's definition of a register is as follows : “A series of consecutive homogeneous sounds produced by one mechanism, differing essentially from another series of sounds equally homogeneous, produced by another mechanism, whatever modification of timbre and of strength they may offer ” (“Hints on Singing,” Ascherberg).

divisions and classifications have been made. Indeed, it is hardly too much to say that no two authorities have ever agreed on the subject.

For upwards of a century these registers, which, even assuming their existence, have no bearing whatever upon the artistic production of the voice, have been the *bête noire* of singers, the "Eastern Question" of vocal physiology; and one may not unreasonably pause to ask if it is likely that Nature, which has never made two voices alike or two faces alike, would proceed in this clumsy fashion, differentiating the mechanism of production by groups instead of by the minutest gradations.

In recent times the voice has been divided by Manuel Garcia into three registers—chest, falsetto, and head, all common to both sexes—the chest and head being each susceptible of a further division into an upper and lower, making five different mechanisms in all.

Emile Benkhe adopted the classification of "thick" or chest register and "thin" or falsetto register, with the addition of a small "head" register.

The two first he subdivided again into upper and lower.

Lehfeldt advanced the theory, which has been largely adopted by subsequent writers, of marginal vibrations in the case of falsetto notes; but there is no sign of agreement between him and his followers as to the extent of the surface involved, or as to certain other points of equal

importance, and his own observations have in some quarters been discredited.¹

Lastly, we have Morell Mackenzie assuring us that physiologically every note has a separate register, and that every person has a different register for every note.

I shall endeavour to show later that this exactly tallies with the artistic principles taught by the Old Italian masters.

In spite of these facts, however, teachers are still to be found whose belief in the register is unshaken, and there are musical academies in London at which the students in their terminal examinations are encouraged to show erudition in this extremely arid and profitless branch of vocal study.

But classifications are both useful and inevitable, and if we are not to classify the voice on the basis of the registers, how are we to classify it?

There is but one useful classification, that which proceeds on the basis of the resonating cavities ; though even here we are on dangerous

¹ The invention of the laryngoscope by Manuel Garcia in 1855, though believed at the time to be of enormous importance, has added little to our knowledge of the physiology of the throat. With regard to vocal instruction, it has, in the opinion of the best judges, had an unfavourable influence upon teachers by directing their attention to the vocal cords, when they should be thinking of respiratory action and the production of beautiful tone. As a means of demonstrating the malpractices of teachers, the laryngoscope is of considerable value. Its employment should be limited to the medical specialist.

ground, for teachers, confusing sympathetic resonance with primary resonance, forget that every note must first be sounded in the mouth and often try to force the voice to resound in the chest or post-nasal cavities.

Thus the late Professor Randegger, of the Royal Academy of Music, defines the register as follows :—

“The registers, like their corresponding resonance chambers, are three in number, viz. :—

- | | | |
|------------------------|-----|--|
| 1. The chest register | ... | Reflecting the voice in the lower or upper parts of the chest. |
| 2. The medium register | ... | Reflecting the voice in the lower or upper parts of the mouth. |
| 3. The head register | ... | Reflecting the voice in the upper part of the head. |

Each register comprises a series of consecutive sounds of the same nature and quality.¹

Of this distinguished professor's actual teaching I do not pretend to have any knowledge ; I merely quote his definition for the purpose of showing that he fails to discriminate between primary and sympathetic resonance. I may add that this is not merely an academic point, that cases have come under my observation where this omission in theory has been faithfully represented in practice, and that hideous nasal sounds have been the result—sounds which are not merely hideous in themselves, but which are

¹ See “Singing,” published by Novello.

deficient in carrying power, though I am well aware that to the unhappy creatures who produce their voices in this manner these sounds are apt to appear both powerful and brilliant.

The explanation is simple.

Sounds produced in the thorax or nasal cavities are imprisoned, and give to the speaker or singer a consciousness of the act of vocalization which is extremely deceptive.

Those, on the other hand, which are produced ¹ in the mouth escape into the surrounding atmosphere, and he is barely conscious, save for the exertion of the respiratory muscles, that he has effected a great vocal feat.

In short, the speaker or singer should not hear much of his own voice. It should leave him as a stone flung from a sling.

The conclusion, therefore, at which we arrive is that the front of the mouth should supply the first consciousness of vocalization, for it is there that the vibrating column of air finds its natural sounding-board. Vibrations in the thorax or nasal cavities should be secondary or sympathetic.

If this fact be clearly realized, there is no objection to the classification of the voice on the basis of the resonating cavities, such as chest, medium, and head, the medium notes resounding wholly in the mouth, the chest notes finding a sympathetic vibration in the thorax,

¹ Voice is generated in the larynx by the vocal cords ; but for artistic purposes it may be said to be produced in the mouth, because it is there we are first conscious of it.

and the head notes finding their affinity in the nasal cavities.

I pass now to the organs of articulation—the tongue, the lips, the teeth, the soft palate.

Nature is singularly logical. As far as the sight and touch extend, she gives us direct control over the vocal organs ; beyond that our control is only indirect or subconscious. All the organs of articulation belong to the former category if we allow the use of such a mirror as Eve may have employed when she saw her image reflected in the placid lake ; and the student cannot be wrong in examining the back of his mouth with the aid of a mirror and so familiarizing himself visually with the action of the soft palate, nor can anything but good come of his gently massaging with his hand the cartilages at the base of the nose and the levator muscles which are attached to the cheek-bone.

Upon the correct action of these muscles depends all artistic articulation ; they are, however, the most frequently neglected, the least understood by those whose business it is to speak well. When properly employed they produce a beautiful smiling position of mouth, the upper lip curling upwards and outwards, the teeth showing to a remarkable extent, particularly the eye teeth or canines, and the corners of the mouth remaining free.

The right action of these muscles tends to loosen the larynx, and will be found to be of enormous importance both in placing the tone

and in producing those phonetic values which constitute standard pronunciation.

In Chapter VIII will be found a series of photographs illustrating the action of these muscles.

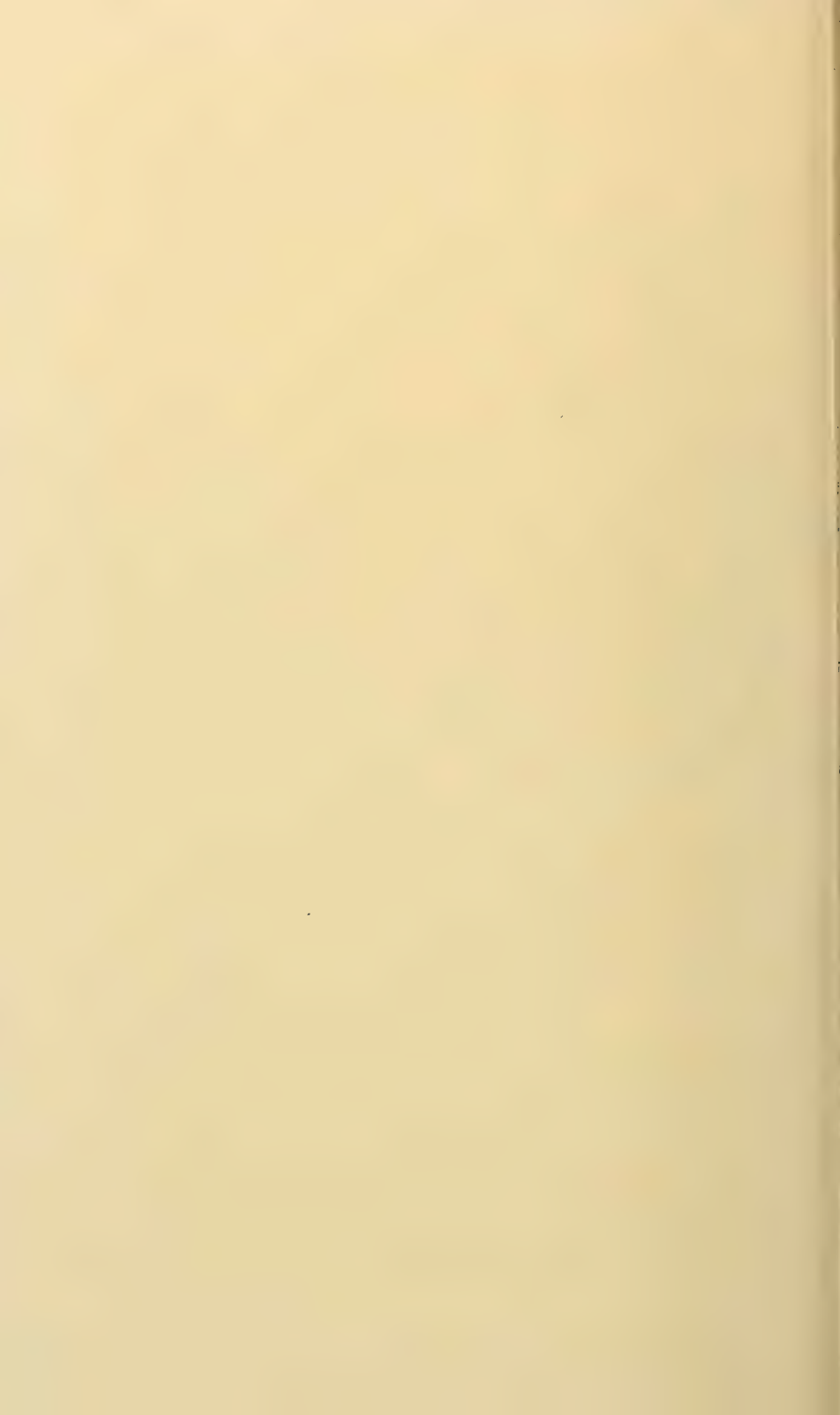
The whole of the expiratory act is fraught with difficulties for the student—difficulties which Art alone will enable him to overcome ; for it is here that all the vocal organs are for the first time harnessed or correlated.

Anatomically, the organs of respiration, the organs of phonation, and the organs of articulation are separate and distinct ; artistically, they are nothing of the kind. They are constituent parts of a musical instrument—the most complex, the most beautiful ever fashioned by the hand of God or man.

It is not easy to clothe the idea in words ; it is still less easy to acquire subjective consciousness of it, and to realize with the rhythmical accompaniment of one's own internal machinery what it means.

Of course, every one knows that the column of air rising from the lungs is set in vibratory motion by the vocal cords, and passes out through the mouth after having been broken up into various sounds by the tongue and lips ; but the expression *breath control* generally finds a more or less apathetic and unintelligent listener.

The reason of this is that the idea cannot be grasped apart from the performance of the act. The student who is unwilling to devote the



necessary time and pains to the more elementary and unvocalized exercises will never grasp it.

Nothing on earth, save the breath control afforded by the respiratory muscles, will ever free the throat from the tightness and rigidity which is an invariable feature of the adult untrained voice. Conversely, nothing but the emancipation of the throat from the improper function of controlling the emission of the breath will ever awaken to a full sense of their duties the respiratory muscles. In the expression "breath control," therefore, lies the secret of the correlation of all the vocal organs.

Gradually, very gradually, the student will learn to relax the organs of the throat until he finds himself possessed of a perfectly loose lower jaw, lips, and tongue capable of executing the commands of the will with lightning rapidity, and a wide and unconstrained air-passage through which the voice, poised on the breath column, will find its way to its appointed resonator in the mouth.

But it is not to be supposed that this happy consummation can be realized without many an arduous struggle, and there are times, especially during the early stages of instruction, when the student may need all his courage and determination to enable him to hold to that straight and narrow path which alone leads to vocal excellence. He will do well to remember that he has to go through much the same process that a child goes through in learning to speak, and that, as in the case of the child, the sounds

produced by this newly acquired power are at first apt to appear weak and ineffective.

Very soon, however, he will begin to realize that this simple, childlike voice is really the one with which Nature has endowed him, his own property, differing from all the other millions of voices in the world.

He will also realize that it is the only voice upon which it is possible to build ; the only voice which can be swelled out from a piano to a fortissimo without injuring the vocal organs ; the only voice which, pulsating with any emotion at the will of the speaker, is capable of being hurled like a boomerang to the remotest corner of a large interior.

EXERCISES FOR STUDENTS.

THIRD EXERCISE.

This exercise may be divided into *a* and *b*. Having by means of the preceding exercises secured a wide open and relaxed throat, the student may essay to learn the management of the breath in expiration, and for this purpose he should lay in a stock of thin wax tapers.

In exercise *a* he should go through the preceding exercise (Exercise II), except that before releasing the breath he should advance a lighted taper to the mouth and extinguish the flame by the blast of air brought about by the release of the abdominal muscles.

It is essential that this should be done without

any movement of the lips or contraction of the throat.

The mere obligation of having to blow the taper out will often cause the student to do both these things.

Exercise *b* consists in maintaining the throat in an open and relaxed condition while the breath is allowed to slip away under the combined control of the diaphragm and abdominal muscles. In order to test whether this exercise is being performed correctly, a lighted taper should be held close to the mouth, and in the course of expiration the flame should not flicker. The increasing contraction of the abdominal muscles which has been described as a feature of Exercise II is also a feature of this exercise, and should continue till such time as the student elects to release the balance of the breath, when he will reproduce the conditions of Exercise III (*a*) and the flame will be immediately and effectually extinguished.

The student should assiduously practise this exercise until he can comfortably exhale in the manner described for a period of thirty to forty seconds, and in no case must he be satisfied that the exercise has been performed correctly unless at the conclusion of the period of controlled exhalation he is able to release the breath in the manner prescribed by Exercise III (*a*) and with the required effect upon the flame.

Warnings.—The student must on no account attempt to control the emission of the breath in Exercise III (*b*) by holding the thorax in a

distended condition. The thorax must, on the contrary, be allowed to freely collapse as the expiratory act proceeds, and it is here that diminution in girth will be first noticed, the epigastrium being pushed out to the last. (See Chapter VIII.)

In seeking to effect the release of the full breath as in Exercise III (*a*) there is a tendency on the part of some students to hold the abdominal muscles in a state of contraction and to consciously draw in the "doll squeak" or epigastrium. This is wrong, and must be guarded against. The desired effect can only be obtained by releasing the abdominal muscles. The "doll squeak" will then collapse.

Further exercises for students will be found at the conclusion of Chapter VIII.

CHAPTER IV

THE RELATION OF VOICE PRODUCTION AND PHONETICS

THE question of phonetics is of the greatest importance to the vocalist as well as to the elocutionist, and it is highly desirable that both should acquire a clear understanding of the main points at issue.

Phonetics is the science and art of pronunciation.

As a science it records by means of phonetic symbols the various varieties of pronunciation in use at the present day; as an art it teaches correct pronunciation by means of phonetic transcription, phoneticians having devised a completely fresh set of symbols independent of ordinary spelling known as the International Phonetic Alphabet, by means of which an unequivocal picture of sound values can be presented to the eye.

It follows that phonetics is of considerable educational value in teaching foreigners and others to speak correct, or, as it is called, "standard" English.

Standard English, according to the phone-

ticians, is derived from the similarities observed in the speech of educated southern Englishmen. This standard is obligatory upon all who would be thought members of the educated and cultivated class.

This may seem a hard saying. It is none the less true. The collective power inherent in a class to impose its will upon its individual members is unquestionable and remorseless, and the man who fails to conform to the required phonetic standard, no matter what his abilities and qualifications may be, will inevitably experience the displeasure of those who do conform.

No one will tell him of his faults—the ways of the majority are more subtle than that; but he will not obtain this or that appointment; he will not be received into this or that house; he will not successfully woo this or that fair lady.

Those who speak “standard” English are marvellously quick to detect those who do not. It is true that the average cultivated man is no phonetician; it is true he cannot analyse either his own phonetic values or those of others; but his knowledge of pronunciation in the bulk is unerring, and he draws impressions which are instantaneous, and to which he attaches great importance.

The reader must not infer that all those who speak “standard” English speak exactly alike. Even accomplished and public speakers conform with varying degrees of success; there will always be differences of pronunciation in par-

ticular words; there may even be dialectal proclivities; but that will not rob the speaker of his claim to speak standard English, if in the main he conform to the practice of educated southern Englishmen.

In other words, the standard is not formed from their differences but from their similarities.

As a method of instruction in teaching standard English, phonetics has certain obvious limitations. It affects merely one end of the vocal instrument and does nothing to promote respiratory control or beauty of tone; articulated utterance, or the joining of words and phrases on the breath is also to a considerable extent outside its scope, and speaking from my own observation of pupils who have been exclusively instructed by means of phonetic transcription, I may say that the results are far from satisfactory. Too often the student seems to regard each word as a separate study, and is unable to joint or articulate them, and the conclusion at which I arrive is that unless phonetics is associated with instruction in vocal production, it is incapable of conferring standard pronunciation, or what may be described as the "hall mark" of the cultivated man.

Phoneticians have shown that the vocal expression of language is just as much a living thing as its structure, and that it is constantly undergoing change.

There was a standard in the time of Chaucer, and another in the time of Shakespeare, but neither would conform to that in use at the

present day, and there is no doubt that in all ages standard pronunciation is associated with a higher physiological condition of the vocal organs.

Standard pronunciation is no artificial device designed to uphold class distinctions, but the expression of a more perfectly adjusted vocal machine, and the futility of attempting to improve the pronunciation without at the same time dealing with the vocal instrument as a whole will be seen to have a sound rationale.

It would be well if educationists and phoneticians admitted this intimate relation between voice production and phonetics. In one respect they have quite unconsciously done so. Observing that certain differences of pronunciation exist between the class from which they derive their standard and a still narrower class recruited mainly from public speakers, they have adopted the theory of a double phonetic standard. They would have us believe that the former may clip their final d's and commit other elisions common to standard pronunciation, but that this liberty cannot be accorded to those who raise their voices in public. Indeed, the latest writer on the subject, Mr. Daniel Jones, of whose admirable book, "*The Pronunciation of English Phonetics*," it is impossible to speak too highly, has set up three standards, and hints at the existence of more—"the rapid conversational," "the formal oratorical," and "the careful conversational."

To these vocalists have added a fourth, a

monstrous variant of their own, which is heard nowhere except when associated with singing. It consists in sounding r's which in ordinary conversation are silent, and rolling them to excess.

To what absurdities does the admission of these numerous standards lead us! There cannot be a standard without the obligation of conforming to it.

Hence, the cultivated public speaker, on returning to the bosom of his family, not merely may but must change his phonetic standard. He should abandon the "formal oratorical" either for "the careful conversational" or "rapid conversational"—Mr. Jones does not tell us which—and on singing a ballad accompanied by his wife or sweetheart, he should again change it for that fearful and wonderful variety of pronunciation in vogue with a certain class of singers.

Does he do so? I think not. I think that whatever his diction may be on the platform, it will be the same in ordinary conversation, and if he possesses the necessary vocal technique, the same also in song, but characterised by a proportionate degree of respiratory effort.

It is, in fact, a question, not of a change of phonetic standard, but of possessing a knowledge of vocal technique suitable to all requirements.

Vocal technique not merely places the voice, gives power and improved tone, but, what is so little realized, it confers a largely increased range of phonetic values and renders it possible

to employ the full or contracted form in a host of words which are commonly misused in this respect by the vocally uneducated. Such are : *from, to, the, of, and, but*. It is not pedantic, as some people suppose, to occasionally give the full sound to the word *and* instead of the contracted sound, but a practical knowledge of vocal technique will alone enable the speaker to employ both forms according to the artistic requirements of the sentence.

The commonly accepted belief that a contraction involves the elision of some letter is utterly erroneous. In the mouth of the cultivated public speaker the contracted sound is still the same word, and possesses a perfectly defined phonetic value. Thus, in the foregoing examples, *from*, as nearly as can be expressed by ordinary spelling, becomes *frum*; the *o* in *to* becomes shortened; the *e* in *the* and the *o* in *of* each assume the same value as that of the *o* in the words *love* and *above*; the *a* in *and* becomes of the same value as the *u* in *under*; but in other respects each of these words has its full value.

The idea that there should be one phonetic standard for private life and another for the pulpit, the lecture-hall, the House of Commons is a relic of that method of teaching which has done so much to bring the word *elocution* into disrepute, the method which makes of it a stilted, formal, unnatural, and tardy proceeding.

True vocal technique inevitably tends to make the pronunciation uniform in whatever circum-

stances one may be called upon to speak or sing ; and though the vocalist will solemnly assure one that the rolling of the *r* in song adds brilliancy and power to the voice, and though some public men will be found to give the full value to their *and's* and their *the's*, where in private life they would give the contracted sound, both are mistaken in doing so.

Provided the vocalist possesses the necessary technique, it is just as effective to sing *morning* and *adorning* as *morrning* and *adorrning* ; or, to take another example from a well-known ballad—" I wonder were we lovers then, in the dear time beyond our ken"—it is just as vocally effective to make the *r's* in *wonder* and *dear* silent after the manner of standard pronunciation, when followed by a consonant, as to roll them after the manner of the vocalists.

The public man, too, will find that in proportion as he employs the phonetic standard of private life he will be more effective by reason of its naturalness.

It is also worthy of note that this theory of a double, a treble, or a quadruple phonetic standard fails to explain the fact that here and there (would the phenomenon were more frequent !) there are to be found private individuals who have never had to say even the proverbial "few words" in public, but whose phonetic standard is obviously that of the accomplished public speaker.

Moreover, it is significant that those alike

who speak the language which the phoneticians are content to accept as their standard and those who are guilty of an uncultured dialect of their mother tongue, such as "Cockney," for example, find in voice production the only means of acquiring that highest standard of all, the English spoken by the cultivated public man.

The gnomes and goblins of pantomime could not retire more crestfallen at the approach of the fairy queen than impurities of diction will disappear as the student learns the technique of the voice. And it is no exaggeration to say that the broadest Lancashire and the most fearful Cockney can alike be converted into standard English, provided merely that the pupil is fairly young, and possesses an average amount of intelligence and perseverance.

The conclusion would therefore seem to be irresistible that there is but one phonetic standard of perfect English, whether for speech or song, and that such differences as exist in practice between public speaking, ordinary conversation and singing must be at the expense of one of them.

CHAPTER V

ELOCUTION AS PRACTISED IN THE PROFESSIONS

THERE is a lamentable lack of critical ability on the part of the public in dealing with vocal matters. Even amongst audiences which might be deemed to be discriminating and artistic it is the commonest thing to find vulgar and meretricious effects rewarded with applause, while the true artist will often be allowed to leave the platform without encouragement.

As might be expected from these facts, the standard of elocution amongst public men in England is deplorably low. It is, indeed, so low as almost to elude criticism.

If a man contrives to squeak, squeal, groan, croak, mumble, drawl, or splutter his words so that fifty per cent. of his meaning is understood, his audience is content to guess the rest.

Not until a man has contracted some vicious vocal habit which unfavourably affects his general health does it commonly occur to him to study the correct method of voice production.

The standard of singing, too, is far inferior to that of which the human voice is capable,

and which we know on trustworthy historical evidence it attained in Italy towards the close of the seventeenth century (see Chapter VIII).

In estimating the causes which are responsible for this state of things one has to take into account three factors :—

1. The apathy and ignorance of the general public.

2. The prevalence of charlatanism amongst teachers.

3. The impatience of the pupil and his indisposition to devote the necessary time to acquire the art.

As a rule it is impossible to achieve any permanent artistic result under six months' work, and then only if the pupil devotes an hour or more every day to conscientious and persevering practice.

For the singing voice as many years are necessary if the pupil desires to become a great artist and to be the happy possessor of a voice which will last out his lifetime.

Nothing is more certain than that the strain of professional use makes for vocal breakdown unless the voice is fortified by the true artistic method of production.

Speaking generally, public men, even the most successful debaters in the House of Commons, have no idea of what is meant by continuity of tone. Clutchings of the throat, or what is technically known as "glottal plosives," are invariably interspersed at frequent intervals between the words. The result

is imperfectly formed phonetic values, and such frequent modifications of tone, and interruptions of vocalization that the speaker becomes ineffective.

On the stage things are even worse. We find the minor parts filled by people who are not merely guilty of bad production, but whose phonetics are often grossly at fault—the pretty young actress, with her squeaky, throaty voice, and affectation of what she believes to be the pronunciation in vogue amongst the upper classes ; the young “juvenile” man with his slipshod enunciation, hardly intelligible beyond the stalls.

We catch a word here, a phrase there, which, with the aid of a little intelligence on our part, enable us to piece out the plot until the principal characters come on.

Surely in no country in the world save England would such a low standard of elocution be tolerated. Even amongst those who may be said to have reached the top of the tree it would be hard to find one who has obtained really artistic command of his voice.

Where are the actors who are capable of playing even a small Shakespearean part with complete vocal success—success, that is to say, if we may pause to define it, success which enables a man to deliver the longest and most difficult sentences, rapidly and effectively, with an edge to every syllable which cuts like a knife, success which releases him from the necessity of holding on to his words as Mr. Winkle

clung to Sam Weller when he made his first essay at skating—where are they? If they were to be numbered on the fingers of one hand, there would be a good many fingers to spare.

The actor is not merely guilty of bad vocal production ; the impurities of his pronunciation are a disgrace to the English stage.

The expression “ standard English ” is unknown to his vocabulary, and the idea that there exists a final court of appeal on matters of pronunciation—a court whose decisions are equally binding upon him as upon any other professional man—is quite foreign to his conceptions.

In one dramatic company of high standing, which has recently left the road, it was considered equivalent to high treason to pronounce the word *your* except as rhyming with *fur*. But perhaps the sounding of the *r* before a consonant in such combinations as *our slaves*, *her hand*, *power with which*, *dear love*, and before a vowel where standard pronunciation has decreed an exception to the general rule, as in *there came*, *wherefore*, affords the best illustration of the actor's licence.

Some actors will even transgress the opposite rule, and will suppress the *r* before a vowel where it should be sounded, as in *fire and water*, *your arm*. It is lamentable that teachers of elocution inculcate this practice. While adjudicating at the Southend Musical Festival last year I commented on the fact that in pronouncing *her eyes* thirty-six juvenile competitors

failed to carry the *r* over, and substituted a glottal plosive.

Of the mispronunciation of particular words the stage affords numerous examples. *Mourn*, which standard pronunciation has decreed should be the same as *morn*, is turned into *moourrn*. The late Mrs. Lewis Waller and the late Sir Henry Irving used habitually to give to the words *England* and *English* the *e* sound instead of the *i*, and their example is still followed in certain provincial companies. I have heard on the London stage the *r* in *iron* given the same phonetic value as in *irony*. At one West End theatre it is the fashion to pronounce the word *girl*, which, when rightly pronounced, very appropriately rhymes with *curl*, as if spelt *ge-irl*. This inevitably degenerates into *gel*.

But the shortcomings of the actor in matters of pronunciation fade into significance when compared with his inability to give vocal expression to the higher elements of verse. It would seem that he goes through no efficient preparation in this matter before venturing on the boards, and one cannot be surprised that in the throes of rehearsal the actor-manager should be unable to devote the necessary time to improvement, and should pass the problem by in despair.

When it comes to speaking verse in unison, the results are preposterous. There is, in fact, no unison whatever. Verse is music—the most ancient form of music known to the human race—and vocal expression should be given to it

by speaking the lines on the breath, with continuity of tone and with pauses in common. On the English stage there is absolutely no conception of doing these things. Each actor brings to the task his own peculiar vocal infirmities, his throaty production, his glottal plosives.

Yet no form of vocal training, when properly carried out, is more educative than speaking in unison, and none will yield more satisfactory or more brilliant results in dealing with a large class of students.

The actor has a dread of the academic ; that he should profitably devote his time to any form of vocal study after having attained the dignity of a salaried professional is anathema to him ; but something might still be done with the younger people if only actor-managers would realize that there is a problem to be faced.

There is no exact parallel in any other country for the state of things which obtains here. In France, in Germany, in Italy one goes to the theatre with the full assurance that, quite apart from the merits of the play, one will enjoy the artistic delight of hearing the language spoken in its highest perfection.

In France, it is true, the actors of the Comédie Française speak a French differing somewhat from that of their professional brethren ; but at least it is based on clearly defined principles, and in other respects conforms to that in general use.

In England the eccentricities of pronuncia-

tion are based on no intelligible principle whatever, and when added to this we get the extremely bad vocal production which is so prevalent, the English stage is rendered unworthy of its mission and becomes an object of ridicule.

I have dealt with the stage. Let us turn our attention to the Church. Here things are, in my opinion, worst of all.

The ministers of the Church of England are recruited from the cultured and educated classes. Probably no denomination could show a higher standard of academical attainments.

It is, therefore, the more remarkable that so little attention should be paid to the art of voice production, upon which all the graces of elocution, and ultimately the highest qualification of a successful speaker, must depend.

Until a man has learned to be himself, to convey by his voice and manner the emotions he feels, he is no fit candidate for Holy Orders. Yet the Church of England alone amongst religious denominations treats the subject with almost cynical indifference.

The unnaturalness, the affectation, the monotony, the downright mouthing of clergymen of the Church of England is a disgrace to the cloth, and the manner in which the Liturgy, the Bible, the sermon are read or recited is often such as to make a man of taste take up his hat and walk out of the church.

Those who are familiar with the stage can testify that any actor, no matter how humble

his position, who approached the interpretation of his part with the complete lack of intelligence which characterizes the performances of clergymen of the Church of England would inevitably have to make way for some more competent artist.

They can also testify that, however bad their production, however imperfect their knowledge of phonetics, actors do study their parts, laboriously, conscientiously, to the best of their education and ability.

It is impossible to suppose that clergymen do anything of the kind, and the only explanation for this state of things would appear to be that they are so much occupied with the doctrinal aspects of what they say and read that they lose sight of every other consideration.

This is a pity, for the Bible abounds with specimens of epic, lyric, and dramatic composition, all very beautiful of their kind.

To take one example only—the first chapter of the Book of Job—it may be doubted if any actor, even Kemble, or Garrick, or Forbes-Robertson could desire a more magnificent opportunity for the display of his histrionic gifts than is afforded by the reading or recitation of this chapter.

Consider the gorgeous simplicity of those opening sentences :—

“Then the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

Consider also the terrible and mysterious import of that oft-repeated intelligence coming from each fresh herald of disaster :—

“And I only am escaped alone to tell thee.”

And, lastly, think of the dignity, the pathos, and the resignation of Job's exclamation in the face of so much calamity :—

“Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave. The Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

I do not propose to dwell upon the features of the average clerical interpretation of this more ancient and profoundly interesting piece of literature. It is something so perverted, so inanimate, and so grotesque that those who have once heard it will require no extraneous aids to call it to mind.

CHAPTER VI

THE THERAPEUTIC AND HYGIENIC ASPECTS OF VOICE PRODUCTION

THAT Nature intended the voice to play a very important part in human affairs is evident from a variety of considerations.

It is the chief means of sexual attraction. The natural timbre of the voice has often an instantaneous and determining influence upon the affections.

It is the indispensable weapon of the public man. What are the most brilliant intellectual attainments to the teacher, the cleric, the statesman, the reformer, without a pleasing and serviceable voice to give them expression?

The extraordinary beauty and complexity of the vocal mechanism, and the remarkable benefits which Nature confers upon those who master the true method of vocal production also bear eloquent testimony to the role she intended the voice to play in human affairs.

Long life, immunity from many forms of disease, good health, self-confidence, and physical beauty are surely no inconsiderable rewards for intelligent and persevering study.

The manner in which these results are brought about may best be considered in relation to the direct and natural consequences of good respiratory action. These are :—

1. The aeration of the blood, and the increase of the red corpuscles.

That the lung should be supplied with plenty of good air is equally necessary as that the stomach should be supplied with plenty of good food, and voice production is the simplest, the surest, and the sanest remedy for anæmia.

2. The ventilation of the lungs and throat.

Voice production is, therefore, a valuable therapeutic agent in dealing with cases of pulmonary and laryngeal tuberculosis. Its importance has yet to be recognized by the medical profession, and it is to be feared that until doctors will acquaint themselves with the artistic aspects of the question little advance will be made.

At present there is rather a slump in serums, and the medical pendulum is inclining to open-air treatment. Millions of money are likely to be devoted in the near future to the building of sanatoria. Yet the proportion of recoveries from this method of treatment is only twenty per cent., and even these are drawn from specially favourable cases.

To take a consumptive patient to the open air is like taking to the water a horse which cannot drink.

The first and obvious thing to do is to improve the patient's respiratory action. There is one thing, and apparently one thing only, which the tubercular bacillus cannot endure, and that is fresh air; but of what use is fresh air if it is all around the patient, and not brought in contact, in sufficient quantities, with the diseased tissue within his lung? ¹

3. The constant and regular massage of the liver and the viscera.

Voice production, therefore, is of great value in cases of dyspepsia.

The heart also is favourably affected, for the ready flow of blood through the lungs keeps it from being clogged.

For the same reason voice production is useful in cases of varicose veins.

Neurasthenia or nerve weakness also yields readily to its beneficent influence.²

¹ See an admirable pamphlet on this subject by Dr. Filip Sylvan, entitled "Consumption: Its Origin and Cure." He writes: "My theory is that first of all we must study the causes of the *tendency* to consumption, and attempt to remove or cure them; secondly, we should study the conditions which make it possible for the bacilli to live in the lungs, and endeavour to put the lungs into such a state of health that the bacilli perish. Is this possible? Yes."

² See "An Address on the Necessities and Advantages of Voice Culture," by St. Clair Thompson, Holywell Press, Oxford.

In spite of the numerous and incontestable advantages of voice production people still retain their inherited preference for physic—the more highly coloured and highly flavoured the better—and look with suspicion upon methods of treatment based on Nature's laws.

Brought up to look to science as the ultimate test of all things, it is perhaps hard for the medical man to realize that in some diseases Art alone can supply the necessary cure.

The common case of incipient phthisis affords a striking illustration of this fact. The doctor desires the apices of the lungs to be inflated. He accordingly directs the attention of the patient to that part of the anatomy. What is the result? The patient immediately develops clavicular breathing.

The moral is obvious, and will bear repeating. Nature has delivered the key of the vocal organs to Art. Only those who worship at her shrine can hope to win her rewards. So unprofitable is any other form of study, that it may be questioned if any human being—even one upon whom the King of Terrors had set his icy touch—were ever found willing to devote any considerable time to the wearisome process of consciously inflating and deflating the lungs, unless it were made the vehicle of instruction of how to speak or how to sing.

It must be clearly understood that, whether for purposes of health or for purposes of art, there is but one correct method of breathing with effort.

It is incredible that Nature should have intended otherwise. Just as beauty is the expression of health, so beautiful tone is the expression of a perfectly adjusted vocal machine.

The world might have been spared a deal of false doctrine in vocal matters had this simple proposition been more clearly understood.

What that correct method consists of has been fully dealt with in Chapters II. and III. The abdominal or Benkhe method, or method of deep breathing, has also been described, and the student warned against it. It remains to repeat that warning here. Its therapeutic value is *nil*, and in cases of pulmonary tuberculosis the method is injurious because it fails to ventilate the apices of the lung. It has the additional disadvantage that it enormously increases the difficulty of learning the right method.

Very often health culturists and schools of physical development will be found to prescribe exercises based on both methods.

I have always observed the results in these cases to be unsatisfactory, and this is not surprising, for, as Dr. Joal has shown, these methods after a certain point are utterly antagonistic.

The therapeutic value of voice production in cases of stammering deserves special attention. A medical writer has estimated that one per thousand of the population of this country are affected in one form or another with this distressing malady. Its victims are placed at a great disadvantage in the struggle for existence,

and in many cases are totally disqualified from earning a living. Yet the disease is undoubtedly curable. On that point the highest authorities are agreed.

It consists merely of a functional derangement, not of an organic defect.

It is only with reference to the methods of cure that we become involved in the quicksands of charlatanism.

Speaking generally, no method is of therapeutic value which does not seek to build up the voice by the ordinary artistic means applicable to any other student of voice production.

It is worse than useless to address oneself to symptoms. Things have to be taught merely as a means to an end. The singing voice or the mere act of phonation must in the first instance be developed before even the tongue or facial muscles can be taught to play their part in the production of speech.

Stammering, even the worst cases of it, will therefore be seen to be merely a phase of bad vocal production, and, wherever the seat of the trouble may be—the tonsils, soft palate, tongue, lips, larynx, or vocal cords—it can invariably be cured by patient and assiduous study.

Such study will be found to exert a most beneficial effect, not merely upon the throat but upon the whole nervous system; and one of the first signs of incipient improvement will be the loss of that terrible self-consciousness from which stammerers usually suffer.

The causes of this disease are generally sup-

posed to be manifold. Without disputing the truth of this belief, I must place upon record my own experience as a teacher, which is that by far the most common cause of stammering is the forcing of young boys' voices in church choirs.

Girl stammerers are rarely met with, though I have had to deal with some cases of this description, especially amongst Roman Catholic children who have been pressed into the service of the convent choir. I cannot therefore avoid the conclusion that much undue forcing of juvenile voices takes place in church choral music, and that it is often attended by disastrous results.

A word, too, must be said with reference to that unhappy being, often the victim of unkindly family critics, who is supposed to be cursed with an incurably bad voice. He cannot sing a note in tune. His ear is supposed to be at fault. He cannot join in a hymn in church without attracting the pained attention of those who sit near him. Such unfavoured ones of the Graces may take heart and courage.

It is not the ear which is at fault so much as the method of production. This can always be set right, and I may even say that I have never met a case of this description where the pupil could not be taught to sing a few notes in tune and to speak with refinement and modulation.

The practical results of voice production find eloquent testimony in the lives of all habitual voice-users.

It is remarkable what an intensely healthy occupation speaking or singing is, even when

carried on, as it frequently is, in a vitiated atmosphere; and though at fifty a man does not usually feel the same energy of limb that he does at nineteen, though football be a thing of the past, though lawn-tennis fail to arouse the enthusiasm that it did, yet if he has studied voice production, he will have at his command a kind of physical exercise which will never desert him and of which he will never tire.

Nature has supplied no substitute for it. Mountain climbing, though it may be the means of inhaling purer air, does not subject the vocal organs to the same correlated, sustained, and rhythmical action.

There is an impression that voice production is only serviceable to young people. That is one of the many fallacies which obscure the subject. Certainly, as the years roll on, the quality of the voice is apt to deteriorate, but it is amazing what Nature will do for us at any age, if we only seek her benefits the right way, and it may be safely said that at no period of life—save extreme old age, when the voice turns once more “towards childish treble”—is the study of voice production unavailing, or unproductive of those hygienic and therapeutic effects to which reference has been made.

CHAPTER VII

READING AND RECITATION

HAVING in the preceding chapters dealt with the common ground of speech and song, I propose in this chapter to deal with elocution only.

In its widest sense, language may be said to be the means by which we indicate and appreciate the mental states of one another, and in this sense may be taken to include the language of the face and eye, the language of the hand, and particularly the language of the voice, which is capable of expressing a variety of emotions apart from the words uttered.

Speech, then, will be seen to be merely a part of language.

It is the part principally used for the expression of intellectual ideas, but it is not exclusively used for that purpose. The feelings or emotions play a much larger part in speech than is commonly supposed.

The variations of tone, the melodious voice, the graceful attitude, the appropriate gesture, the charm of rhythmical language, and the

numerous other tricks by which a great orator knows how to sway the hearts of his audience are nothing if not emotional.

Even the printed page is not innocent of appeals to the emotion. No doubt the separate propositions are purely intellectual, but such methods as italics, notes of exclamation, rhythm, imagery, pauses belong to the language of emotion.

Nor is it desirable that emotion should be eliminated. Any attempt to do so will render the spoken word, whether it take the form of reading aloud, or of recitation, or of extempore speaking, singularly flat, cold, and uninteresting.

To take an example familiar to all—Mark Antony's oration in Shakespeare's play "Julius Cæsar"—the irony of his oft-repeated remark, "Yet Brutus is an honourable man," depends in great measure upon the extent to which the speaker is capable of expressing by his voice, manner, and gesture a meaning wholly at variance with the literal meaning of the words.

Impromptu speaking, recitation, reading aloud are the various forms of vocal expression.

Certain subtle differences distinguish them, the most instructive of which would appear to be that between reading and recitation. In the former the personality of the reader is predominant. In the latter it is sunk in that of the author.

The reader says in effect: "I am giving you

another man's thoughts, but the interpretation is mine."

The reciter says: "Don't think about me. Try to believe the author is speaking to you. I give you, not only his thoughts but his emotions."

I do not forget that it is possible to take exactly the opposite view, to say that however much the reciter may try to express the personality of the author his efforts are vain, and that it is really his own personality he is giving us all the time, whereas in reading we have the author's pure and distilled message.

The answer to this is that there is such a thing as bad recitation as well as good, just as there is bad and good reading; and if my view be the right one, it follows that reading, however good, can never express the author's meaning so perfectly as recitation.

The proposition is one which is likely to arouse considerable hostility on the part of those who are accustomed, often with too good reason, to associate recitation with the tricks of the elocution master, and who look to reading as the more scholarly and refined method of interpretation; but that a deeper insight into the author's meaning, and also that greater facilities of expression must accompany the act of committing to memory, and that the act of reading is itself a preoccupation and limitation of the artistic resources of the speaker would appear to be fairly obvious and simple statements of fact.

I earnestly recommend all students of elocution to study verse, and good verse, of which the English language holds such wonderful stores, and not merely to study it, but to give it vocal expression.

Its educative value is enormous, for in order to express the music of the line the reader is at once laid under the obligation of acquiring rapid and flexional movements of the lips and an open and relaxed throat, the former to group the less important words and syllables, the latter to sustain the vowel sounds sufficiently long to carry the beat.

Verse is probably the oldest form of music known to the human race, and is believed to be founded upon the heart's beat.

It is significant that children are always sensitive to it. Old age, too, still finds delight in it, proving that it is still a living art. I have never met a human being who was unconscious of its charm when proper vocal expression was given to it.

There are two methods of vocal interpretation.

If approximately the same inflections are used line after line, we have what is called the "rhythmic method," a very favourite method in relation to verse.

The "Faerie Queene" is a good illustration of simple rhythmic requirements.

It has a sonorous music which appeals to the ear, as some gorgeous pageant might appeal to the eye, while the thought is not of such an

exciting nature as to call for the expression of much dramatic feeling.

“A gentle knight was pricking on the plaine,
 Y’cladd in mightie armes and silver shielde,
 Wherein old dints of deep wounds did remaine,
 The cruell marks of many a bloody field ;
 Yet armes till that time did he never wield ;
 His angry steed did chide his foaming bitt,
 As much disdayning to the curb to yelde ;
 Full jolly knight he seemed, and faire did sitt,
 As one for knightly jousts, and fierce encounters fitt.”

The following is also a good example :—

“Alas ! how easily things go wrong.
 A sigh too much, or a kiss too long,
 And there follows a mist and a weeping rain,
 And life is never the same again.”

Much prose composition also falls to this method.

Who could fail to be affected by the music of the following lines by De Quincey, or who would not give to them a rhythmic lilt?

“I was stared at, grinned at, chattered at, by monkeys, by parroquets, by cockatoos. I ran into pagodas : and was fixed for centuries at the summit, or in secret rooms ; I was the idol ; I was the priest ; I was worshipped ; I was sacrificed ; I fled from the wrath of Brama through all the forest of Asia ; Vishnu hated me ; Seeva laid wait for me. I came suddenly upon Isis and Osiris ; I had done a deed, they said, which the ibis and the crocodile trembled at.

“I was buried for a thousand years in stone coffins, with mummies and sphinxes, in narrow chambers at the heart of eternal pyramids.

“I was kissed with cancerous kisses, by crocodiles ; and laid, confounded with all unutterable slimy things, among reeds and Nilotic mud.”

Cultured and uncultured alike have shown a marked preference for this method of reading, adopting it, not only in cases where it can be employed with artistic effect but also to excess, and in cases where it should not be employed at all.

It becomes, therefore, important to notice at the outset the reason of this preference, and also of this strange similarity of practice existing between classes generally so dissimilar.

Mr. Clifford Harrison ¹ has observed that—

“In the Jewish synagogue the priest and the people still read the Psalms in a monotonous rhythm which is possibly a lingering echo caught from the far-off service of the Tabernacle. In the East the thousand temples of Japan and China, of Thibet, of Burma, and of Hindostan, hear the voices of priests who take up the melancholy and monotonous rhythmic formulas to Buddha and to Brama, age after age. The Gregorian chants that rise and fall in waves of choric sound to-day through cloister, church, and minster may be another expression of the same ancient use and instinct.”

And he seems to find something mysterious in this continuity of practice.

To those, however, who have studied voice production the explanation will appear sufficiently simple.

The rhythmic method is vocally the easiest, requiring fewest inflections and calling for the minimum of breath control.

It is therefore common ground of priest and peasant, of teacher and pupil, of the man of letters and of the artisan.

¹ “Reading and Readers,” Methuen.

It is the method adopted by the "bookie" shouting the odds upon the racecourse, and by the coster, whose strange jargon of prices, chaff, and appreciation of his wares is to be heard in the side streets of London.

Not only is it vocally the easiest; it is intellectually the lowest, calling for the least exercise of the mind during delivery.

It will be seen, therefore, that the rhythmic method has potent advantages, and will never lack adherents.

Monotonously and inartistically performed, it becomes the *sing-song* method. It is much to be regretted that the Church of England is a byword for this kind of reading, and even impromptu speaking (see Chapter V).

There is also the dramatic or narrative method.

Here there is no sequence of inflection, no defined channel through which the thought finds expression; the words have the freshness and spontaneity of impromptu speaking.

This method is equally suitable for prose and verse; it is also the most artistic, the most difficult, and the most dangerous.

To free the voice from conventional tones, to allow it to take its natural and habitual way, may seem a simple thing, but let it not be forgotten that it is indispensable from the obligation of being heard—an obligation that assumes infinitely more terrible proportions in the lecture-room or the church than in the privacy of one's own apartment.

This method is prohibitive to all save those who have mastered the principles of voice production.

It calls for too many inflections, for too perfect a control of the breath, for too alert a condition of mind to be used by any save those who have established the control of brain over muscle.

In the great majority of cases, therefore, the expression "choice of a method" is a misnomer. So far as reading with effort is concerned, there is little or no choice; or perhaps it may be better said that the reader made his choice years before, when he took steps to cultivate, or neglected to cultivate, his voice; for no man can hope to use it on a higher artistic plane than his purely technical studies have qualified him for.

Not only does the dramatic method call for the highest degree of vocal technique; it inexorably demands the possession of that mysterious quality "good taste."

The dramatic reader will need to exercise much discretion in fixing the amount of dramatic feeling which can be justly imparted to any particular composition.

Much of the finest prose and poetry in the language falls naturally to the dramatic method. It is the only method capable of touching the human heart.

The mother, reading some fairy-tale to her child, will generally adopt it, though at an earlier period the familiar nursery rhyme may fall to the rhythmic method.

Notwithstanding the superiority of the dramatic method of reading, it is, however, unwise to say of this or that composition that it cannot be read in any other, for the same pieces have been read by different people, and read most successfully, according to both methods.

Indeed, every variety of method may often be legitimately employed in the rendering of one piece.

Nothing is more certain than that the art of reading demands variety—variety of colour, variety of inflection, variety of speed, and, lastly, variety of treatment.

It would seem that in this matter something must be left to individual taste. It is so with all executive arts.

Paderewski and Backhaus present us with widely different interpretations of the great musical composers ; yet each has his admirers, and however strong our own conception of artistic purity may be, it is well to preserve a wise catholicity of judgment in dealing with the ideals of those from whom we differ.

A good example of the dramatic style as applied to narrative poem is to be found in the first stanzas of the "Dream of Eugene Aram" :—

"'Twas in the prime of summer-time,
 An evening calm and cool ;
 And four and twenty happy boys
 Came bounding out of school.
 There were some that ran, and some that leaped
 Like troutlets in a pool."

While "Hervé Riel," by Robert Browning, may be cited as an example of dramatic incident. A few lines will suffice here :—

"'Give the word !' But no such word
Was ever spoke or heard :

For up stood, for out stepped, for in struck amid all these—
A Captain ? A Lieutenant ? A Mate—first, second, third ?

No such man of mark, and meet

With his betters to compete ;

But a simple Breton sailor pressed by Tourville for the fleet,
A poor coasting pilot he, Hervé Riel : the Croiseckese,
And—'What mockery or malice have we here ?' cries Hervé
Reil :

'Are you mad, you Malouins ? Are you cowards, fools, or
rogues ?

Talk to me of rocks and shoals, me who took the soundings,
tell

On my fingers every bank, every shallow, every swell

'Twixt the offing here and Grève where the river dis-
embogues.

Are you bought by English gold ? Is it love the lying's for ?

Morn and eve, night and day

Have I piloted your bay,

Entered free and anchored fast at the foot of Solidor,

Burn the fleet and ruin France ? That were worse than fifty

Hogues ?

Sirs, they know I speak the truth ! Sirs, believe me there's
a way !

Only let me lead the line,

Have the biggest ship to steer,

Get this *Formidable* clear,

Make the others follow mine.

And I lead them, most and least, by a passage I know well,

Right to Solidor past Grève,

And there lay them safe and sound ;

And if one ship misbehave,

Keel so much as grate the ground,

Why, I've nothing but my life—here's my head !' cries
Hervé Riel."

Or, if it be objected that, owing to Browning's exceptionally "staccato" style, this poem is hardly a fair test, let us take another example, where the music of the line is beyond dispute, but where it must to some extent be subordinated to the dramatic requirements of the poem.

I refer to the "Sick Stock Rider," by Lindsay Gordon. A few verses only must suffice here :—

"I've had my share of pastime, and I've done my share of
toil,

And life is short—the longest life a span ;
I care not now to tarry for the corn or for the oil,
Or for the wine that maketh glad the heart of man.

For good undone and gifts mis-spent and resolutions vain
'Tis somewhat late to trouble. This I know.

I should live the same life over if I had to live again,
And the chances are I go where most men go.

The deep blue skies wax dusky and the tall green trees
grow dim,

The sword beneath me seems to heave and fall ;
And sickly, smoky shadows through the sleepy sunlight
swim,
And on the very sun's face weave their pall.

Let me slumber in the hollow, where the wattle-blossoms
wave,

With never stone or rail to fence my bed,
If the sturdy station children pull the bush flowers on my
grave
I may chance to hear them romping overhead."

The correct interpretation of blank verse has given rise to considerable difference of opinion.

On the one hand we have the actors, who

for the most part are called upon to interpret it ; and, on the other, we have the men of letters, who for the most part are incapable of interpreting it.

The actors tell us it should be rendered in the dramatic style ; the men of letters say in the rhythmic. To whom are we to pin our faith, or is there some third method unknown to both?

In considering this question we must realize that the dramatic method, rightly understood, does not consist, as many actors seem to think it does, in placing exaggerated emphasis on particular words, but in greater variety and greater naturalness of inflection, and in the admixture of dramatic feeling.

We must also remember that in all good verse the form is so allied to the sense that the beat will invariably fall upon those words which the logic of the thought requires to be emphasized.

To this rule blank verse is no exception. It is true blank verse differs from other metres in certain respects.

The line is longer, and possesses greater elasticity owing to the freedom of introducing superfluous syllables. On this account blank verse affords much greater opportunities for syncopation or inversion of the rhythm, and probably for the same reason has been made the medium of a much greater range of emotion than is common to other forms of verse.

To give vocal expression to this syncopation

or inversion two things, both a matter of vocal technique, are necessary—

(a) The lengthening of the vowel sounds sufficiently to carry the beat ; and

(b) the grouping of the less important words.

Provided the five beats which are generally characteristic of blank verse are heard, the time can be syncopated to any extent—even in the manner of introducing the rest, as in music—though the difficulty of doing these things, and the opportunity they afford for giving artistic interpretation, are not easily appreciated except by those who have studied the production of the voice, and it is to be feared that a large number both of actors and men of letters are not amongst them.

There is particularly one characteristic of the actor's interpretation of blank verse to which the man of letters takes exception—his habit of unduly emphasizing unimportant words.

While conceding that the business of the actor is to clothe the author's composition with flesh and blood, and that anything which will, in his opinion, serve this purpose is entitled to sympathetic consideration, it must be admitted that this habit is carried to excess, and sometimes leads to pleonastic and jejune interpretation. Take, for example, from the apothecary scene, "*Romeo and Juliet*," the lines :—

Romeo.

"I sell thee poison, thou hast sold me none."

It is the tradition of the stage to emphasize

I, thee, thou, and me to the utmost extent—woe betide the neophyte who dares to question it ! This, of course, turns the line into mere prose, and not far removed from the performance of an elementary school class. The meaning would be more pellucid, and the music of the line preserved, if the emphasis were placed in the natural order of things upon the subject and verb *I sell*, and upon the subject and verb of the following clause, *thou* and *sold*.

A word, too, as to the sonnet.

Far be it from me to presume to lay down hard-and-fast rules with reference to the interpretation of this or that form of poetry, but I must say that on account of its extreme complexity the sonnet seems to call for the admixture of as much dramatic feeling as possible, otherwise, unless the hearer has some previous acquaintance with the poem, he will experience considerable difficulty in disentangling the sense from the rhythm.

There can be no question that the dramatic method tends to elucidate the meaning.

Take, for example, the sonnet by Wordsworth on King's Chapel, Cambridge :—

“Tax not the Royal Saint with vain expense,
With ill-matched aims the architect who planned,
Albeit labouring for a scanty band
Of white-robed scholars only, this immense
And glorious work of fine intelligence.
Give all thou canst ; high Heaven rejects the lore
Of nicely calculated less or more ;
So deemed the man who fashioned for the sense

These lofty pillars, spread that branching roof,
 Self-poised, and scooped into ten thousand cells,
 Where light and shade repose, where music dwells
 Linger—*and wandering on as loth to die ;*
 Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
 That they were born for immortality."

One more example of the necessity of the dramatic method—a song by Keats, "Where's the Poet?" :—

"Where's the poet? Show him! show him,
 Muses nine! that I may know him.
 'Tis the man who with a man
 Is an equal, be he king,
 Or poorest of the beggar clan,
 Or any other wondrous thing
 A man may be 'twixt ape and Plato;
 'Tis the man who with a bird,
 Wren or eagle, finds his way to
 All its instincts. He hath heard
 The lion's roaring, and can tell
 What his horny throat expresseth,
 And to him the tiger's yell
 Comes articulate and presseth
 On his ear like mother-tongue."

Lastly, it seems desirable to give an example of poetry which can be read according to either method :—

"Then out spake brave Horatius
 The Captain of the Gate :
 'To every man upon this earth
 Death cometh soon or late,
 And how can man die better
 Than facing fearful odds
 For the ashes of his fathers
 And the temples of his gods?'"

As I have before indicated, there is little to be said which partakes of the nature of hard-and-fast rules with reference either to when these methods are to be employed or to the manner of their application. Not only may both methods be employed side by side, but a vocal artist of the first rank will sometimes blend them so perfectly that opinions will differ as to which method he is employing.

Two things merely are necessary—vocal technique and artistic feeling—and where these are present the artist will make his own set of rules ; where they are absent, no rules will avail.

This, at least, may be noted :—

1. In employing the rhythmic method it is quite unnecessary to be guilty of the appalling monotony which is so commonly characteristic of it in the mouths of those who are vocally uneducated, and which has given rise to the expression “ sing-song ” method.

2. That whatever method be employed there must always be a consciousness of the rhythm.

3. That when the dramatic method be employed it should be employed with restraint—*i.e.*, the drama, though deep and strong, should never trespass upon the domain of recitation.

The dramatic method of reading is, generally speaking, the abomination of the scholar and the man of letters. To them it seems like reading in italics, and it is not a little difficult to hold the scales evenly between them and that much larger class who inveigh with equal

warmth against the rhythmic, or, as they call it, sing-song method of reading.

To do so it is necessary to bear in mind that the object of reading is to drive home the meaning of the author to the mind of the hearer. It is undeniable that much rhythmic reading, in consequence of its appalling monotony, utterly fails to do this.

Dramatic reading, on the other hand, even when carried to excess and inartistically performed, seldom fails in this respect ; while really good dramatic reading is so immeasurably superior to any other that it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the hostility of the scholars is due not so much to the style itself as to the extremely bad examples of it they have had the misfortune to listen to.

CHAPTER VIII

THE OLD ITALIAN METHOD

OF the Old Italian Method of teaching, we know, relatively to its excellence and importance, very little. It flourished in Italy during the first half of the eighteenth century and is generally associated with the life and activities of Nikola Porpora, who was born in 1686, and who became principal of the School of Singing at Naples, which post he filled till about the year 1760.

It would, however, be absurd to suppose that this magnificent system of training the voice originated with him. It must have been the common property of him and many of his contemporaries, and it would seem that it sprang into its full beauty and vigour in response to the growth of opera which was then becoming more exigent in its vocal demands.

From the testimony of contemporary historians there can be no doubt as to the superior accomplishments of the vocal artists of Porpora's day. Unfortunately, very little has come down to us concerning their methods and principles of teaching.

A few scattered maxims are practically all

we have of an authoritative and contemporary source, and even these are open to conflicting interpretation, for the old Italian masters were men who expressed themselves in terms of art and who made no claims to scientific accuracy.

The difficulty of arriving at their method is increased by the fact that there are to-day two schools, each claiming descent from the old Italian masters, and each advancing tradition the most conflicting and contradictory.

1. There is the German School, which, so far as unbroken descent is concerned, should be the pure channel of all that is best in the teaching of Porpora, for we know that Porpora's pupil Anton Hubert settled at Berlin in 1741 and established there a school of singing, and another of Porpora's pupils, Johann Adolph Hasse, settled at Dresden about 1730.

2. There is the school founded as late as 1850 by Francesco Lamperti at Milan.

"Selecting many of the members of his company from the natives of the surrounding country, he educated and brought out at his theatre many famous singers. . . . Attracted by their success, pupils flocked to him from Bergama, Milan, and other parts of Europe, and he there trained many of the most distinguished operatic vocalists. . . . Appointed in 1850 by the Austrian Government professor of singing to the Conservatorio at Milan, he brought out amongst others . . ., Albani, and Shakespeare. . . . A friend of Rubini and Pasta, and associated with the great singers of the past, Lamperti followed the method of the old Italian school of singing, instituted by Farinelli and taught by Crescentini, Velluti, Marchesi, and Ramani." ¹

¹ Grove's "History of Music."

I may add that it is impossible to read his book, "The Art of Singing," to which reference has been made in the Preface of this work without feeling that in his grasp of principle, in the simplicity, proportion, and correlation of his method, there stands revealed no mere singing master, but a great artist "with the world's secret trembling on his lip."

By this time the reader will have perceived, and I have no desire to withhold the fact, that "the Old Italian Method," though a legitimate term, and one dear to the vocal artist, is yet a highly debatable term; also that tradition, as in some other departments of human affairs, is a somewhat fallible guide.

But there still remain other criteria by which all art methods must be judged.

These are :—

1. *Their results.* (a) Is the tone beautiful? and does the voice last? On these questions the cultivated musical ear will always remain the final court of appeal. (b) Are the vocal organs in a healthy state? Here the opinion of the medical specialist will always be listened to with respect.

2. *The extent to which they conform to the eternal principles which underlie all art*, such as simplicity, proportion, and correlation.

Judged by these tests, it is impossible to admit the claims of the German School.

Of beauty and continuity of tone, of enduring vocal power, of all the benefits to health and personal appearance that flow from the correct management of the voice, the German method is innocent.

Possibly the guttural language of the Teuton proved an obstacle to the acclimatization of those methods which up till then had invariably been associated with the beautiful liquid sounds of the Italian tongue. Before I conclude this chapter I hope to show that in Lamperti's teaching there shone forth in Italy for the last time the glories of the Old Italian Method. But before proceeding to describe the Old Italian Method as I know it, it will be convenient if I give some account of those methods of which I disapprove.

I have already described the great schism with regard to the question of respiration with which the name of Mandl is associated. (Chapter II.)

Mandl has passed away, and his pernicious system of breathing is now generally discredited.

But there are other and equally dangerous heresies with regard to the organs of the throat and the resonating cavities.

Emil Behnke, for example, taught (and disseminated his views with profuse physiological data) that the voice box should ascend as the voice rises in pitch; and there are still to be found teachers who profess the same faith.

There are also to be found teachers whose faith it is that the voice box should be held

rigidly down as the voice ascends the scale. The results of this method of teaching are terrible. Extreme fatigue, cramp of the throat, are the inevitable consequences, and no words can be too severe for the ignorant charlatans who teach this monstrous method. (See Old Italian Method, No. 8.)

The placing of the voice also gives rise to considerable differences of opinion. Many teachers force the voice to resound primarily in the nasal cavities. (See Chapter III.)

Nothing can be more offensive to the refined musical ear than tones produced in this manner.

Lamperti says :—

“This frontal voice is formed by tightening the throat ; then the air is denied a free passage, and escapes above the voice ; this produces a most undesirable result, something which can hardly be called voice, but which is, on the contrary, a disagreeable unmusical noise, colourless, monotonous, and cold, powerless to give life to any phrase, and incapable of combining with another voice ; for, let the frontal sound be ever so well in tune, it will always sound out of tune, and will amalgamate with nothing else. There are (wonderful to relate) people who are so far blinded as deliberately to substitute this disagreeable phenomenon for real voice, who study it, and promise themselves the best results from it.”

There is also the *coup de glotte*, or shock of the glottis, in which a large number of teachers, some of whom profess the Old Italian Method, are enthusiastic believers.

With regard to this, I will first quote the opinion of Dr. Holbrook Curtis, of New York,

whose admirably lucid and useful work¹ should be in the hands of every vocal student.

He says :—

“The shock, or *coup de glotte*, is death to the voice ; it is born of ignorance, and to teach or allow its continuance is a crime. We have no words strong enough to properly condemn it. Having seen the dire effects upon many pupils of those who advise it, are we not justified in considering its advocates parties to either gross ignorance or atrocious malpractice ? ”

And Lamperti says :—

“The current of air passing from the lungs through bronchial tubes, trachea, and larynx should not cause the vocal cords to vibrate by a sudden forcible emission, but by a slow, steady one.”

I am aware that some difference of opinion exists as to what constitutes the *coup de glotte*,² but from the point of view of the Old Italian Method, any principle of teaching which tends to promote consciousness of what is going on in the throat is radically wrong ; and speaking as a vocal teacher, I may say that from the examples of the *coup de glotte* which have come under my notice, I have no hesitation in endorsing to the full the remarks of Dr. Holbrook Curtis.

Lastly, I have to mention the fixed thorax. This is perhaps the most fashionable error of vocal teaching at the present day. Pupils are directed to spread out the floating ribs, par-

¹ “Voice Building and Tone Placing,” Henry Kimpton.

² See “The Voice : Its Downfall, its Training, and its Use,” by Charles Lunn.

ticularly the lateral region, and to hold them distended till the completion of the expiratory act, the epigastrium meantime being consciously drawn in as the breath escapes.

It is difficult to write of this method with a becoming sense of decorum, or to abstain from strictures which might seem out of place in a work of this description. I will merely say that as a means of producing noise and exaggerated chest and post-nasal resonance this method is generally effective, but that a rigid thorax is death to the voice as far as beauty of tone is concerned, that it can never confer control over the expiratory act, and that recourse to some part of the anatomy of the throat inevitably follows, with the result that very often the student is rendered incapable of singing a note in tune.

All these practices are deserving of the strongest condemnation. They ruin the natural beauty and timbre of the voice, and though Nature is infinitely forgiving, at almost any age, to those who pursue the methods intended by her, it generally happens that the pupil becomes discouraged, and gives up the problem in despair.

Vocal heresies have one characteristic in common : they tend to become a fetish to the teacher who employs them.

It is so with all art methods which are not rigorously tested by the supreme requirement of Art. That requirement is beauty ; in the case under consideration, beauty of tone.

No one is qualified to teach the production of the voice who does not possess the clearest ideas on this subject.

Lest the reader should suppose that charlatanism is more rampant in London than in the great continental art centres, let me say at once that this is not the case.

The German school, which is practically the negation of vocal art, and consists of mere shouting, is almost universal on the Continent, and even in Italy is generally taught.

In the course of fifteen years' teaching I have necessarily come in contact with students who have been trained at Brussels, Paris, Leipzig, Berlin, Dresden, Milan, Florence, Naples, Rome, and other centres, and I have found the results in many of these cases to be not merely unsatisfactory, but wholly and utterly disastrous.

It is a melancholy fact—and one which every student of the voice ought to realize—that while most schools of music have upon their staffs one or two men of artistic ability who know, and are capable of imparting to others, the true method of vocal production, the rest are often the merest charlatans, whose only qualification would appear to be that they are able to accompany a ballad at the piano.

Having said so much of the methods with which I disagree, it remains to give some account of the methods with which I am in agreement.

The Old Italian Method as it has come down

to me through the eminent teachers whose names are mentioned in the Preface of this work is remarkable for its extreme simplicity, a characteristic of all true art. It is also clear, logical, and consistent.

For the enumeration of its chief features I am somewhat indebted to Mr. William Shakespeare's "Art of Singing," Part I,¹ and particularly to the work of Lamperti.²

They are as follows :—

1. *Perfect Control over the Expiratory Act.*

This can only be attained by painstaking and persistent exercise in breathing, both previous to and concurrently with early exercises in vocalization. The breath must be under such absolute control that there is no waste before the attack.

I again quote Dr. Holbrook Curtis. He says :—

"The breath must not be forced in the attack, but must be regulated by the muscles of expiration, and not modified by muscular contraction above the glottis. The tone should be produced without appreciable respiratory effort."

And Lamperti says :—

"The voice must lean upon the breath, or, to express it more clearly, be sustained upon the column of air."

In other words, the transition from the inspiratory act to the expiratory act is physically almost imperceptible to the singer, owing to the

¹ Published by Metzler.

² "The Art of Singing." Ricordi : London and Milan.

perfect equipoise of the inspiratory and expiratory muscles. Hence the artistic sensation to which reference has previously been made of still taking in breath after the expiratory act has commenced.

2. *Complete Immunity of the Vocal Cords from Conscious Adjustment.*

Lamperti says :—

“The commonly established belief that there is a fixed point in the voice at which the register is to be changed is erroneous.”

In other words, as Morell Mackenzie has told us, every note and every semitone has a separate register.

3. *Direction of the Column of Air towards its Natural Sounding-board, the Hard Palate.*

This secures primary resonance, and is to the singer or speaker the first consciousness that he is vocalizing. Sympathetic resonance immediately follows if the tone be correctly placed, and proceeds in the case of the lower notes from the thorax, in the case of the upper from the nasal cavities.

The result is the beautiful composite or rounded tone characteristic of the cultivated voice.

4. *Wide-open and Unconscious Throat.*

A wide-open throat must not be confused with a wide-open mouth. And though the latter is

almost universally recommended by writers on elocution, and by many writers on singing, it can only have the opposite effect to that desired.

A wide-open mouth, save in the case of the accomplished artist, tends to close the orifice of the throat.

5. *Loose Tongue and Jaw.*

The tongue must be trained to move freely without any corresponding movement on the part of the jaw or throat. All vowel sounds, whether preceded by the letter *l* or not, should be produced with an absolutely relaxed throat and stationary jaw, the lips and tongue being alone concerned in bringing about the changes in sound value.

In the case of most consonants the jaw moves from time to time to enable the lips and tongue to do their work more effectually, but it must never become rigid.

6. *Freedom of the Upper Lip and Facial Muscles.*

The student should be constantly encouraged to lift the upper lip into a smiling posture and to feel the note on the hard palate behind the eye teeth. The corners of the mouth must not be drawn backwards, but must remain free.

7. *Unconscious Adaptation of the whole Vocal Mechanism.*

Nature has given us no consciousness of the mechanism of the throat below the soft palate. Any attempt to acquire this consciousness, as,

for instance, by the *coup de glotte*, will only result in disaster.

8. *Stationary Position of the Voice-box, or "Adam's Apple."*

This does not mean that it is completely immobile. On the contrary, it will be found by placing the finger lightly upon it to be quivering and vibrating like the throat of a bird ; but it must not have the appearance of rigidity, and it must not ascend, as the pitch rises in the manner advocated by Behnke.

9. *Perfect Tuning of the Note before any Attempt is made to Impart Volume and Power.*

That is to say, the teacher should arrive with absolute certainty at the true note. By the true note is meant, not merely the note which is perfectly in tune but the note which is expressive in the highest degree of the personality of the student. If it be asked, How does the teacher know when he has arrived at this note? I reply by his combined knowledge of technique and his musical ear.

The old masters were never tired of exhorting their pupils to strive for the quality of the note with the comforting assurance that quantity would follow. In the perception of what constitutes the true note undoubtedly lies the secret of the Old Italian Method.¹

¹ Morell MacKenzie's view, that the secret of the old Italian method lay in "the happy combination of common

To the uninitiated it must always seem absurd to attempt to build up the voice on such slender foundations. But to the true teacher no sound can be more welcome than that first faint fluttering of the voice above the breath column ; for it is to him the unmistakable sign that his labour has been rewarded, and that his pupil has set his foot on the first rung of the ladder.

10. *The Practice of "Portamento," or Carrying the Voice over an Interval on the Breath.*

This is of the essence of the Old Italian School. Lamperti says : "*Chi non lega non canta*" ("He who does not bind does not sing"). The idea is somewhat difficult to express apart from musical symbols. It is the logical consequence of a breath control, an open throat, and unconscious vocal cords. Given these accomplishments, it will be possible while passing from one note to another to carry the voice over without sounding the intervening notes, and without loss of tone.

Without these accomplishments this cannot be done.

11. *The Habit of Taking in Breath through the Nose.*

This habit must be strenuously cultivated, and sense on the part of the master with inexhaustible patience and docility on the part of the pupil," while containing an element of truth seems to me to neglect the most essential feature.

if, as sometimes happens, the air-passages are clogged owing to the presence of adenoids or other obstructions, a surgical operation may be necessary. In the case of dramatic music with very short intervals for breathing, air may sometimes be taken in through the mouth, but such exceptions are of rare occurrence, and the general rule is of the utmost utility, both artistic and hygienic, the air-passage through the nose being so arranged by Nature as to effectually warm the coldest air before it reaches the lungs.

12. *The Importance attached to the Italian Vowel "a" heard in the English Word "Father" and the Italian Word "L'anima" and represented Phonetically by the Symbol "a," as a Basis of Instruction in the Production of the Voice.*

This vowel, Lamperti tells us, must be absolutely founded upon the breath. It must not be inferred that other vowels are not also employed, but that this one, known to the science of philology as "the father of the vowels," is the one upon which the voice is mainly built up.

A striking, if somewhat gruesome, testimony to the value of this tradition is to be found in the fact that after death, when all muscular control is at an end, the throat and jaw immediately relapse into the position required to utter this sound.

13. *The Management of the Soft Palate.*

This part of our vocal anatomy is entirely subject to the regulation of the will. It can be

raised and lowered at pleasure, and its free action is a necessity for the correct pronunciation of certain closed sounds. Complete control over this part of the vocal mechanism should therefore be cultivated.

14. *There must be no Appearance of Effort while Speaking or Singing.*

The face of the vocal artist must freely express the emotions of his heart, a state of things which is impossible if he is preoccupied with the anxieties of vocal production.

Demosthenes tabulated this as one of the signs of a good orator, and pointed out that it immediately establishes a sympathetic feeling between the speaker and his audience. The maxim of the ancients that true art tends to conceal art was never more finely illustrated than by the correct management of the human voice. The most consummate vocal artists—speakers and singers alike—not merely have the appearance of being perfectly at their ease, but invariably possess the most natural tone. Their performances do not conjure up thoughts of elocution or of vocal production, and it is amusing to note that their success is almost invariably supposed to be due to the bounty of Nature—a poor compliment to one who has devoted the best years of his life to perfecting his vocal instrument.

These, then, are the main features of the Old Italian Method.

That, apart from oral teaching and example,

the written word should be but a poor medium of instruction is a fact of which the reader cannot be more acutely conscious than I am myself.

Words, musical notation, phonetic symbols are alike incapable of portraying beauty and continuity of tone, and one oral lesson enforced by the example of a beautifully produced voice will do more to awaken the nascent perceptions of the student than all the definitions and descriptions ever penned.

Inquiry is often made concerning the age at which it is wise for a student to commence his studies.

Is it not dangerous to begin before the voice breaks? The answer is, No, not if the studies are conducted on sane and artistic lines. That many children's voices are irretrievably ruined by instruction of another kind is a melancholy fact, which does not in the least degree refute the above statement.

It remains to warn the student against some forms of vocal exercise which I believe to be particularly injurious.

The first is the practice of holding the breath for a given period after the completion of the inspiratory act.

Assuredly, Nature never intended that we should bottle up vitiated atmosphere in our lung even for a period of five seconds. The proceeding is injurious to health, and if indefinitely prolonged would cause death. In the case of elderly people it sometimes causes rupture of

the cellular tissue of the lung (*emphysema*), and on that account exercises of this nature have been rigorously tabooed in some schools of physical culture.

It also tends, by fatiguing the respiratory muscles, to destroy that sustained and powerful control over the expiratory act which may be regarded as the end of voice production. Lamperti says: "When a full breath has been taken there must be no delay in attacking the note. Delay is as fatal as over-hurry."

I also desire to caution the student against the pernicious habit of training the vocal organs separately.

This method of instruction is incapable of producing beautiful tone. Nothing can do that save the harmonious correlation of the vocal organs, which should as far as possible be inculcated from the first lesson.

A word, too, with regard to physical exercises in general. These are, of course, excellent in their way, but the vocal student must be careful not to perform them with a rigid larynx. If this warning be not heeded, he may have to postpone the realization of his ambitions until the Greek Kalends.

Lastly, I would warn the student not to attempt any kind of advanced singing or elocution until he has first laid the foundation of his art in a sound knowledge of voice production. Lamperti tells us that the famous Porpora made Caffariello study two pages of exercises for six years, and Caffariello

became the greatest singer of the eighteenth century.

But though these counsels of perfection may tend to provoke a smile in these days, Art is unchangeable, and still demands of those who would win her rewards some sacrifice of time and patience.

Until sound respiratory action is mastered, and until the unconscious note is definitely placed on the hard palate, there can be no really artistic advance in the development of the voice, whether for the purpose of singing or elocution.

I do not say that a meretricious effect cannot be produced by other means, but if beauty of tone is to be our ideal, then the fact is as I have said.

Should the student ignore this condition, he will in the long run confirm and render more pronounced such faults of vocalization as he may already possess.

Of the man who sings or speaks on the throat it may be said that the more he uses his voice the worse it will become ; on the other hand, of him who sings or speaks on the breath it may be said that " practice makes perfect," and that until the inevitable forces of decay make themselves felt he will continue to gain in volume and flexibility.

It is remarkable, too, how good vocal technique develops that higher knowledge, that refined literary feeling which is generally termed " expression."

So also will the student become master of " gesture," of " pose," of " deportment," and

of all those graces so dear to the heart of the teacher of elocution. They will come, and it will be with modest gait, with downcast eyes, with halting step ; but they will come none the less surely, and they will be the handmaids of style to solicit attention, to carry conviction, not the flaunting libertines, whose extravagant behaviour will serve to draw attention only to themselves.

EXERCISES FOR STUDENTS.

FOURTH EXERCISE.

The student may now safely begin to vocalize, provided the preceding exercises have been mastered ; but these must on no account be discontinued.

They should be rapidly rehearsed each time before attempting the present exercise.

In this manner the student will learn that the principles which govern the management of the breath in an unvocalized form are also applicable to breath converted into sound, and he will come to realize the intensely practical nature of the preceding exercises.

As in Exercise I, let the jaw drop and come to a position of absolute repose, resting, so to speak, on its own weight, the lips being slightly parted and not adhering to the teeth, then produce the sound *ah* as heard in the word "father," preceded by the letter *l*, four or five times ; thus :—

l-ah—l-ah—l-ah—l-ah.

In this manner the student will at once learn

to combine articulation with continuity of tone and pitch. The *ah*, Lamperti tells us, should be absolutely founded upon the breath, while the articulation should be effected by the movement of the tongue.

Care must be taken to give exactly the same phonetic value to the letter *l* on each occasion it is uttered. This letter was rightly regarded by the old Italian masters as a vowel, and to its correct pronunciation they attached enormous importance. The student should therefore realize that it has a separate existence from the *ah*, and may be prolonged as long as the breath lasts. In the pronunciation of the *l* the jaw and mouth are absolutely immobile, the tongue being slightly raised and almost adhering to the gums behind the front teeth.

In the production of the *ah* the jaw descends, and the tongue with it.

Any movement of the jaw while producing the *l* will cause the tone to fly back, and instead of the beautiful liquid sound taught by the Old Italian masters, and which we are all capable of producing, we have the throaty conventional *l* frequently heard in the English language.

The first and last thing, therefore, which the student has to learn is to attack this sound on the breath with absolute immobility of tongue and jaw. He will then experience a sensation as of the voice floating above the breath and passing into the surrounding atmosphere with an infinite deal of ease and total absence of vocal effort, save for the intense muscular control exerted by the respiratory organs.



as heard in any word beginning with that letter.



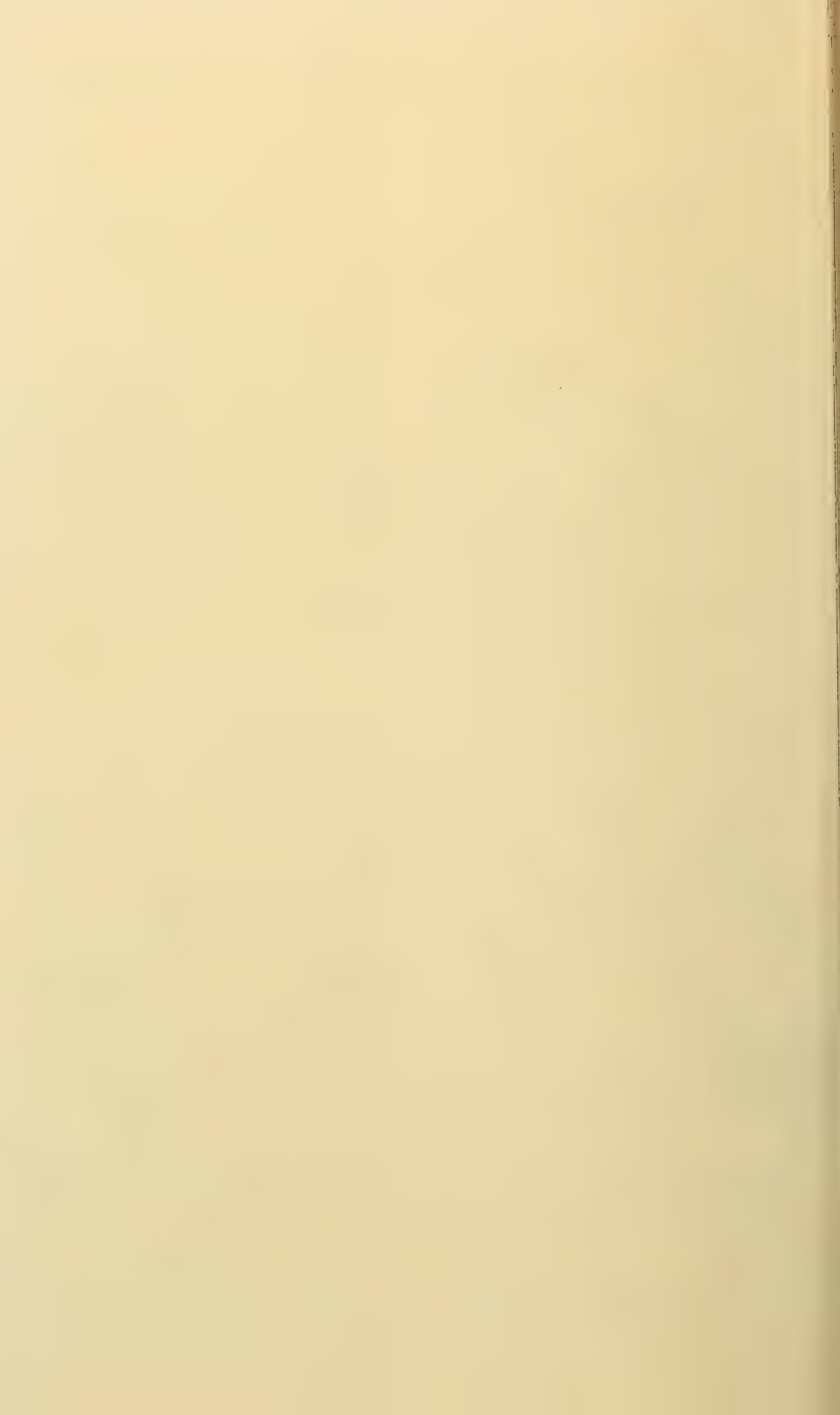
ah as heard in the word *rather*.



ey as heard in the word *let*.



ee as heard in the word *deem*.



This exercise should never be continued until the breath is exhausted ; a substantial balance of breath should always be released in an unvocalized form, and, as in Exercises I and II, this balance should pass freely over the roof of the mouth.

FIFTH EXERCISE.

Re-study the preceding exercises and then produce the sounds

l-ah—l-ey—l-ee

on the method there described.

Care must be taken to give the correct sound value to the second vowel. The sound should be that heard in the word *let*, not the sound heard in the word *laid* ; the former is a pure vowel, the latter a diphthong.

To give this sound value the lip must be raised by means of the lavator muscles. From this movement of the lips a beautiful smiling position of the mouth results, in which the corners are perfectly free—very different from the hideous conventional grin caused by drawing the lips backwards over the teeth.

The student will be wise to regularly massage the lavator muscles which are attached to the cheek-bone, and also the ligaments at the base of the nose.

SIXTH EXERCISE.

Lah-ley-lee ; lah-lee-loo.

There must be no modification of the throat in the production of these sounds. All vowel

sounds, whether preceded by the *l* or not, must be produced with an absolutely relaxed throat, the changes in sound value being caused by modifications of the resonating chamber (*i.e.*, lips, tongue, and cheeks).

SEVENTH EXERCISE.

Wah-wey-wee ; wah-wee-woo.

This exercise requires a more rounded and forward position of the lips than previous ones. The sound must be produced extremely far forward, between the lips and teeth. The mouth should be slightly open, and for the production of each of these sounds the jaw should move, but it should be perfectly loose throughout the whole process, and must never become rigid.

If the exercise be correctly performed, the quality of the tone will remain unimpaired.

EIGHTH EXERCISE.

Certain combinations of consonantal sounds are extremely useful, both for acquiring standard pronunciation and for preserving equality of tone.

Such are :—

Za—za—za.

Za—rey—gar.

Tha—tha—tha.

Tha—no—ma.

Tha—rey—za.

Fah—vah—rah.

Sa—za—gar.

Bah—bah—bah.

Pah—pah—pah.

Pah—lah—bah.



t as heard in the word *zenith*.



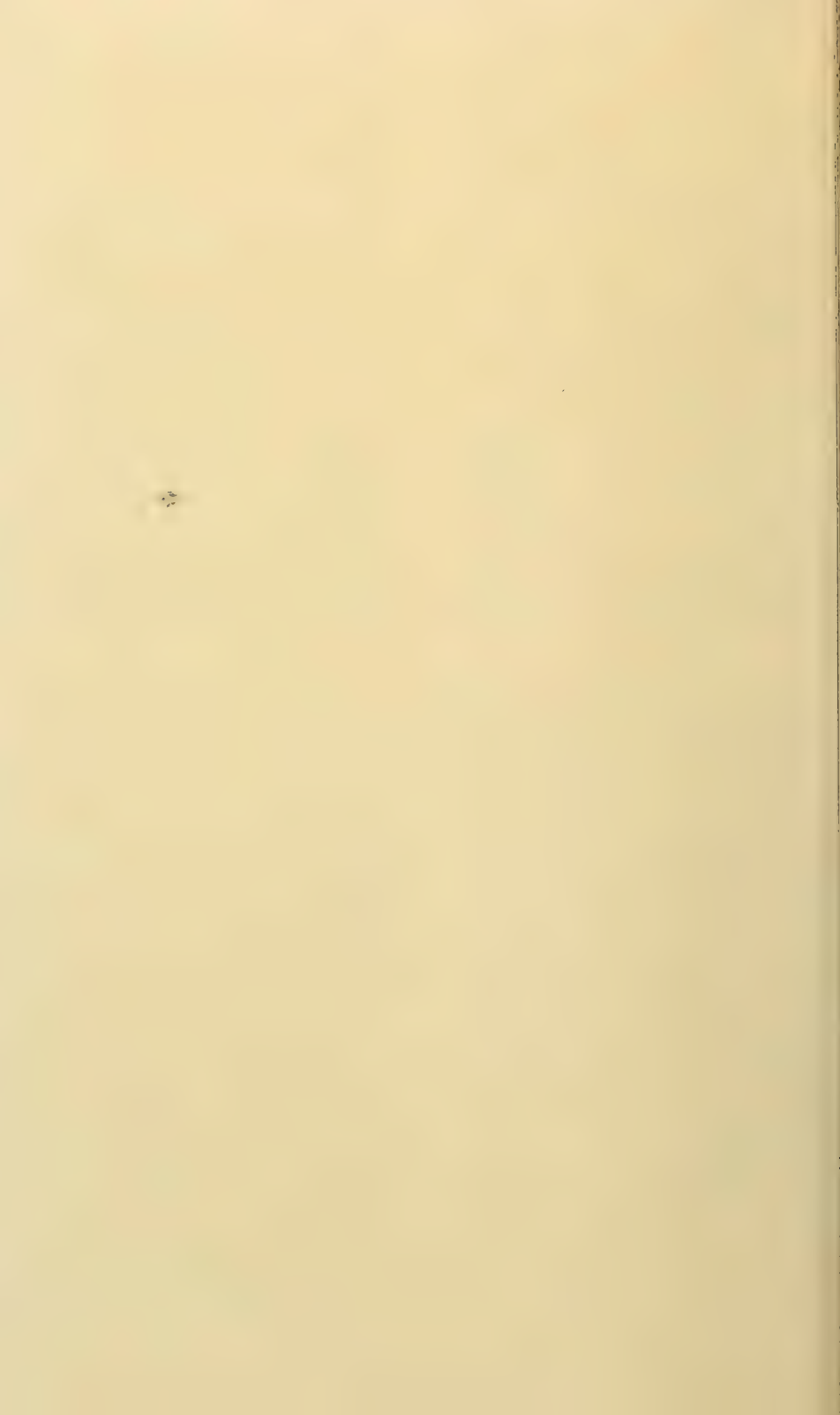
th as heard in the word *then*.



r as heard in the word *fern*.



Conventional grin of the vocally uneducated person.



As in the preceding exercises, the jaw moves, but must not stiffen. There must be perfect equality of tone.

The student should experience a sensation of absolute ease. He should be able to perform these exercises either slowly or with extreme rapidity without the slightest modification of tone.

VOCAL EXERCISES

"Among vocal exercises, I especially recommend the use of those that proceed by semitones."—LAMPERTI.

My design in composing the following exercises has been to render them more elementary and more carefully graduated than is commonly the case.

The student is earnestly requested to transpose them into every key, and he should bear in mind that their object is to combine articulation with song, to place the speaking voice on the singing voice, to effect the correlation of the vocal organs.

If correctly carried out, they will insure rapid progress ; but the student is warned that unless he has to some extent mastered the correct method of breathing, and also to some extent succeeded in placing the voice, he cannot hope to perform them correctly.

I.

Musical score for Exercise I, featuring three staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with a common time signature (C). It contains two phrases of half notes: "Lah, lah, lah, lah, lah." and "Lah, lah, lah, lah, lah." The middle and bottom staves are piano accompaniment, also in treble and bass clefs with a common time signature. They provide harmonic support for the vocal line using half notes and chords.

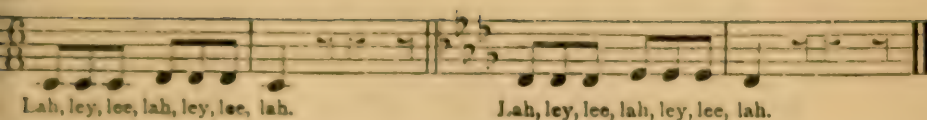
13 Exercises in half ton

II.

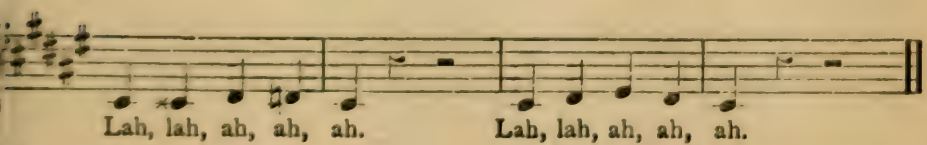
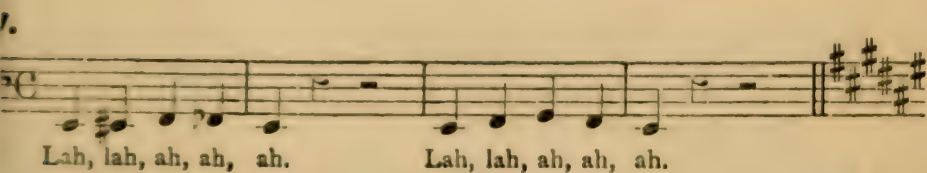
Musical score for Exercise II, featuring three staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with a 9/8 time signature. It contains two phrases of whole notes: "L M N O P Q R, lah," and "L M N O P Q". The middle and bottom staves are piano accompaniment in treble and bass clefs with a 9/8 time signature. They provide harmonic support for the vocal line using whole notes and chords.

Musical score for Exercise III, featuring three staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). It contains two phrases of whole notes: "lah, L M N O P Q R, lah," and "L M N O P". The middle and bottom staves are piano accompaniment in treble and bass clefs with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. They provide harmonic support for the vocal line using whole notes and chords.

8 Exercises in whole to



13 Exercises in half tones.



13 Exercises in half tones.

V.

Musical score for exercise V, measures 1-3. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The time signature is 6/8. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the accompaniment is in the bass clef. The lyrics are 'Lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah.' The melody consists of eighth notes, and the accompaniment consists of chords and single notes.

Lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah.

Musical score for exercise V, measures 4-6. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The time signature is 6/8. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the accompaniment is in the bass clef. The lyrics are 'Lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah.' The melody consists of eighth notes, and the accompaniment consists of chords and single notes.

Lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah.

13 Exercises in half ton

VI.

Musical score for exercise VI, measures 1-3. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The time signature is common time (C). The melody is written in the treble clef, and the accompaniment is in the bass clef. The lyrics are 'Lah, lah, lah, ah, ah.' The melody consists of half notes, and the accompaniment consists of chords and single notes.

Lah, lah, lah, ah, ah.

13 Exercises in half ton

II.

Musical score for Exercise II, featuring three systems of vocal and piano accompaniment. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is common time (C).
 System 1:
 - Vocal line: A series of eighth notes ascending and then descending: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4.
 - Piano accompaniment: A series of chords: G4-B4, A4-C5, B4-A4, G4-F#4, E4-D4, C4-B3, A3-G2, F#3-E2.
 System 2:
 - Vocal line: A series of eighth notes ascending and then descending: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4.
 - Piano accompaniment: A series of chords: G4-B4, A4-C5, B4-A4, G4-F#4, E4-D4, C4-B3, A3-G2, F#3-E2.
 System 3:
 - Vocal line: A series of eighth notes ascending and then descending: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4.
 - Piano accompaniment: A series of chords: G4-B4, A4-C5, B4-A4, G4-F#4, E4-D4, C4-B3, A3-G2, F#3-E2.

13 Exercises in half tones.

III.

Musical score for Exercise III, featuring three systems of vocal and piano accompaniment. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is common time (C).
 System 1:
 - Vocal line: A series of eighth notes ascending and then descending: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4.
 - Piano accompaniment: A series of chords: G4-B4, A4-C5, B4-A4, G4-F#4, E4-D4, C4-B3, A3-G2, F#3-E2.
 System 2:
 - Vocal line: A series of eighth notes ascending and then descending: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4.
 - Piano accompaniment: A series of chords: G4-B4, A4-C5, B4-A4, G4-F#4, E4-D4, C4-B3, A3-G2, F#3-E2.
 System 3:
 - Vocal line: A series of eighth notes ascending and then descending: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4.
 - Piano accompaniment: A series of chords: G4-B4, A4-C5, B4-A4, G4-F#4, E4-D4, C4-B3, A3-G2, F#3-E2.

VIII.—(CONTINUED).

Lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah.

13 Exercises in half ton

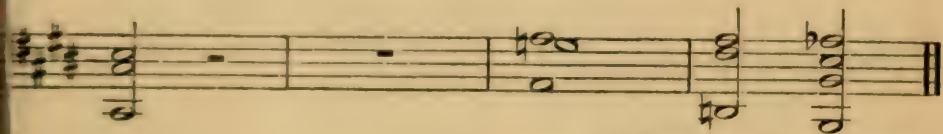
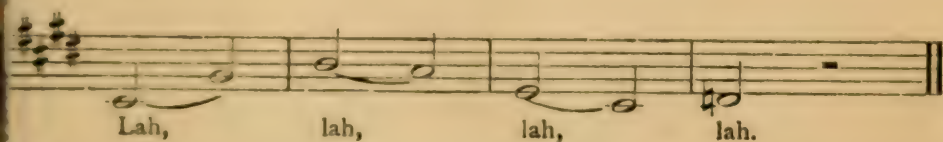
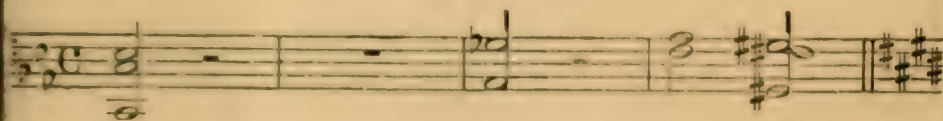
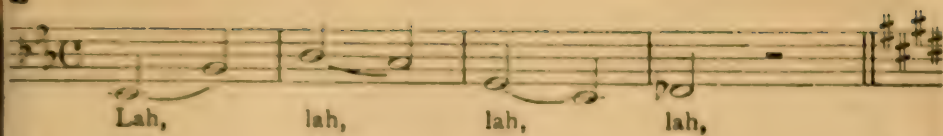
IX.

Lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah.

Lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah.

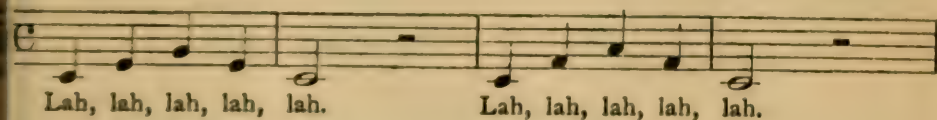
13 Exercises in half ton

C



13 Exercises in half tones.

I.



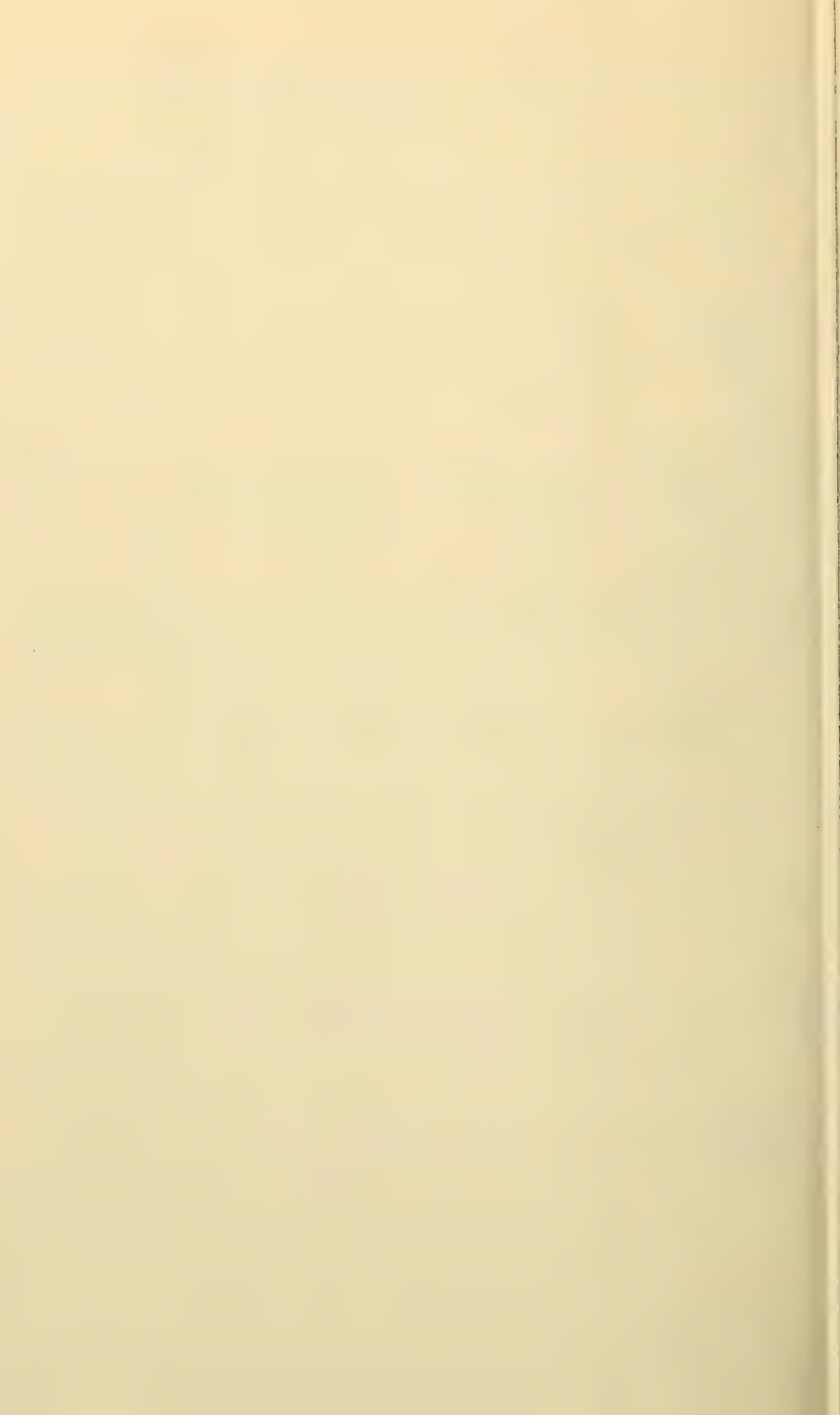
XI.—(CONTINUED).

Lah, lah, lah, lah, lah. Lah, lah, lah, lah, lah.

Lah, lah, lah, lah, lah. Lah, lah, lah, lah, lah.

Lah, lah, lah, lah, lah. Lah, lah, lah, lah, lah.





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